

**INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN BENUE
STATE NORTH- CENTRAL NIGERIA:
The Challenges of Rehabilitation and Reintegration**

BY

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Abstract

Throughout history, compulsory mass migrations have profoundly shaped the world we live in today. Forced displacement and large-scale movement of people have created significant humanitarian challenges.

This paper explores the multifaceted challenges faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Benue State, North Central Nigeria, with a focus on the processes of rehabilitation and reintegration. Although literature abound on IDP in Benue state, posit that limited attention has been given to the objective and subjective stance/facet of the rehabilitation and reintegration processes for returning IDPs to their communities. It is this yawning gap this study intends to fill. Nigeria's ongoing conflict with insurgency, conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers, inter-communal violence conflict, and banditry has led to a significant displacement crisis, affecting millions.

The study elicits its information gathering from secondary sources of data collection. Forced migration and social inclusion theories were adopted for the study. The findings reveal critical gaps in governmental and non-governmental interventions, highlighting issues such as inadequate funding, limited access to basic services, and weak coordination among stakeholders. Furthermore, the paper underscores the psychosocial impact of displacement, emphasizing the need for comprehensive mental health support. Structural challenges, including land disputes and economic instability, further complicate the reintegration process.

The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and fostering sustainable reintegration of IDPs in Benue State. Through a holistic analysis, this study contributes to the broader discourse on displacement and offers actionable insights for improving the livelihoods of affected populations.

KEYWORD: IDPs, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Benue State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed the harrowing images of individuals fleeing violence, homes obliterated by bombs, and the devastation caused by storms, wildfires, and earthquakes. Makeshift camps, teeming with families who have lost everything, are now a stark reality. The scenes from Gaza, Ukraine, Lebanon and Sudan are merely the latest manifestations of a growing trend of civilian upheaval and displacement worldwide. According to the United Nation High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) the global forced displacement has increased at mid-2023, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at 110million individuals who is as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations has become a subject of public discourse and concern.

It is therefore imperative to note that internal forcibly displacement has emerged as a major global problem. Over the past two decades, the global population of forcibly displaced people has grown substantially from 33.9 million in 1997 to 65.6 million in 2016, and 110million in 2023 which still remains high. Most of this increase was concentrated between 2012, 2018, 2022 and 2024 driven mainly by the Syrian conflict, Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar, Russia/Ukraine, Israel/Palestine Hamas war, Sudan conflict and Tigray war in Ethiopia. But this rise also was due to other conflict in the region such as in Iraq and Yemen, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR report, 2023; DTM report, 2024).

To Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 59.1million people were displaced by the end of 2021. Paradoxically, this number rose to 75.9million globally by the end of 2023, up from 71.1million in 2022. However, in 2023, sub-Saharan Africa, hosting 46 per cent of the world's internal displaced persons (IDPs), remained the most affected region. During the first half of 2023, 6.8million new displacements were reported, with 83 per cent occurring in Sahara Africa. This proportion is significantly higher than the same period in 2022, following the full

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scale invasion of Ukraine, but it aligns with trends from years prior to 2022 (UNHCR report, 2023).

In Nigeria, internal displacement has been driven by a combination of factors, including conflict, insurgency, herder-farmer clashes, banditry, and natural disasters. Benue State, often referred to as the “Food Basket of the Nation” due to its agricultural significance, has been significantly impacted. As of 2023, IOM identified 1,092,196 IDPs in north-central and north-west Nigeria, with Benue State among the worst affected. Displacement was driven by communal clashes, herder-farmer conflicts, and natural disasters such as flooding. In Benue, 18% of IDPs resided in camps, and 82% lived within host communities. Benue hosts thousands of IDPs displaced by herder-farmer clashes, communal violence, armed banditry, and flooding. These conflicts have not only resulted in the destruction of livelihoods and properties but have also exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region (IDMC, 2023; IOM, 2023).

According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 708 new arrivals were recorded in Benue State within one week, attributed to violence and flooding. This influx has significantly increased the strain on humanitarian services (Emergency Tracking Tool Report 7, Benue State, 12–18 August 2024). Food remains the most critical need in 86% of the assessed locations, with vulnerable groups including 95,154 pregnant and breastfeeding women, 49,308 elderly individuals, and 7,491 unaccompanied or orphaned children facing severe risks. Furthermore, over 64% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) require shelter assistance due to the destruction or damage to their homes (IOM Nigeria and UN OCHA, October 2024).

The herder-farmer clashes in Benue State are particularly pronounced due to competition over land and resources. The introduction of anti-open grazing laws has further fueled tensions, often leading to violent confrontations. Additionally, sporadic communal violence and attacks by armed groups have forced many communities to flee their homes, seeking refuge in camps and temporary shelters. The displacement crisis in Benue reflects the complex interplay of climate-induced and conflict-induced factors, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions.

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Furthermore, Nigeria has approximately 3.4million internally displaced persons (IOM.2023), reflecting its significant share of this global issue. With a population exceeding 200 million and comprising 250 ethnic groups, internal conflicts have forced millions to flee their homes in recent years. More than 3.4 million Nigerians have been displaced due to conflict, insurgency attacks, herdsmen/farmers clashes, banditry and natural disaster that have severely impacted the country over the past fifteen years.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," has experienced significant upheaval due to persistent herder-farmer conflicts, communal violence, and climate-induced disasters (International Crisis Group, 2017; Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2020). These crises have resulted in the displacement of over 3.4 million Nigerians, with Benue State being one of the most affected regions in the country (IOM, 2023). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the state face significant challenges, including inadequate access to shelter, food, healthcare, and education, which exacerbate their vulnerabilities (Omilusi, 2020).

Despite government efforts, such as the enactment of the anti-open grazing law in 2017, the situation remains dire, as implementation gaps and political tensions have escalated conflicts rather than resolving them (Aghedo, 2022). Moreover, the process of rehabilitating and reintegrating IDPs into their communities has been hindered by insufficient resources, weak institutional frameworks, and a lack of coherent policies (Ojowu & Odoemena, 2021). This has created a cycle of displacement and prolonged dependency on humanitarian aid (IDMC, 2023). The unique socio-political dynamics of Benue State, combined with its agricultural significance, have further complicated the reintegration of IDPs. Land disputes, competition for natural resources, and recurring violence have made sustainable rehabilitation nearly impossible (Okoli & Lenshie, 2018). Additionally, the absence of comprehensive data and effective coordination among stakeholders has left many IDPs without adequate support to rebuild their lives (Ajibo et al., 2022).

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This study seeks to address the critical question: *What are the primary obstacles to effective rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs in Benue State, and how can existing policies and practices be improved to ensure sustainable solutions?* By identifying the barriers and proposing actionable strategies, the research aims to contribute to reducing displacement-related vulnerabilities and fostering long-term stability in the region.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the rehabilitation and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Benue State. The objectives include:

- To identify and analyze the primary barriers to the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs in Benue State.
- To evaluate existing reintegration policies and their impact on supporting displaced populations.
- To propose actionable strategies for improving the rehabilitation and reintegration processes in Benue State.
- To examine the roles of local, national, and international actors in addressing internal displacement challenges in Benue State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the primary obstacles to the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs in Benue State?
- How can existing reintegration policies be improved to better support displaced populations in the region?
- What specific strategies can address the multifaceted challenges of internal displacement in Benue State?
- What roles can local, national, and international actors play in ensuring sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs?

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CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Internal Displaced Persons

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 in order to stave off the effect of armed conflict, violations of human rights, situations of generalized violence, natural or manmade disasters, to another place considered relatively safe either within their own national borders (as internally displaced persons) or travel across an internationally recognized state border (as refugees) (Ladan,2006).

Guy Martin defined internally displaced persons as those who have been forced to leave their homes and sources of livelihood but are still within the borders of a country undergoing violent internal conflict (Martin 1995:248). Ocha, (2003) described IDPs as persons or groups of persons who because of armed conflict, systematic violations of human rights, internal strife, or natural or man-made disasters have been forced to flee their places of habitual residence suddenly or unexpectedly, to another location but have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. It is expedient to clearly distinguish between refugees and IDPs. The displaced persons, who have crossed an international border and falls under one of the relevant international legal instruments, are considered as refugees. Although internally displaced persons are often defined as those uprooted by conflict, human rights violations and natural or human-made disasters, Robinson (2003) expanded the scope to also include those displaced by development projects. Most times, the focus of sympathetic attention and international aid Centre are on those displaced by disaster than for victims of development.

In situations of armed conflict, IDPs, like any other person benefits from international Humanitarian law and the legal protection of international human rights law. However, while

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they continue to benefit from all of the international human rights instruments and legal protection available to other persons, they are excluded from the specialised protection of international refugee law because they have not crossed an international border. Ibanez and Moya (2007) opined that the fact that they are displaced from their homes exposes them to a situation of vulnerability to poverty and human right abuses.

Instruments on internal displacement

Although the Guiding Principles are non-binding, they have been endorsed by states and adopted by the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa (The Kampala Convention) (African Union, 2009). The Convention legally binds all signatory states, including Nigeria. Nigeria's National Policy on Internal Displacement draws from the Guiding Principles and the Kampala Convention. It adopts the UN definition of IDPs, recognizes the *fact* of displacement as a basis for protection and assistance, and acknowledges international humanitarian agencies as partners (National Policy 2021). This policy commits the Nigerian government to protect and assist IDPs wherever they are located in Nigeria, irrespective of the cause of their displacement or the size of the displaced population size.

Refugees

As defined in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees (the Refugees Convention), a refugee is defined as a person who “*owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religious, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or return there because there is a fear of persecution.*”

The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees of November, 1984 laid down that the definition of refugee could not only incorporate the elements contained in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol (or the 1969 AU Convention and General Assembly resolutions), but also cover persons who have fled their country because their safety or their safety or their liberty were threatened by a massive violation of human rights.

In the words of Shambhavi Gopalkrishna “Refugees are people who are forced to flee their homes due to persecution, whether on an individual basis or as part of a mass exodus due to political, religious, military or other problems, are known as refugees.”

Rehabilitation

According to United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) rehabilitation is seen as part of a comprehensive approach that includes return, local integration, and resettlement. It involves rebuilding the physical, social, and economic fabric of communities. This includes the restoration of basic infrastructure, services, housing, and livelihoods. Also in Susan Martin, a scholar in migration studies, highlights that rehabilitation for IDPs must go beyond mere physical reconstruction. It should encompass psychological rehabilitation, social cohesion, and reconciliation efforts. She emphasizes the need to address trauma and the breakdown of social networks that often accompanies displacement.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) defines rehabilitation as the range of measures taken to help displaced individuals recover their dignity, economic stability, and social rights. This includes both short-term emergency interventions and long-term development strategies, ensuring that IDPs are reintegrated into society in a sustainable manner. International Organization for Migration approach to rehabilitation involves a comprehensive support system, including medical care, psychological counseling, vocational training, and assistance in recovering or rebuilding homes. The organization views rehabilitation as a process that helps IDPs regain autonomy and rebuild their lives with dignity. In a nutshell rehabilitation refers to the process of restoring IDPs to a state of normalcy and functionality. It encompasses a range of interventions, including physical and mental health support, educational and vocational training, and provision of basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. The aim is to help IDPs recover from the trauma and loss they have experienced and regain their ability to live productive lives.

Reintegration

Smith refers to reintegration as the process through which internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reintroduced into their home communities or new areas where they can rebuild their lives

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after displacement. Reintegration can be social, economic, and political, encompassing the restoration of livelihoods, access to services, and social cohesion in their host or original communities (Smith, 2020). It generally refers to the process of assisting displaced persons to reestablish their lives and communities after returning to their areas of origin. Reintegration focuses on securing housing, employment, education, and mental health support to ensure long-term stability for returnees. It is therefore imperative to note that the process of reintegrating IDPs into society, including their local communities or new environments if returning to their original homes is not possible. This involves ensuring access to employment, education, social services, and participation in community life. Reintegration efforts are aimed at fostering social cohesion, preventing marginalization, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for IDPs.

CHALLENGES OF REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION IN BENUE STATE, NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

Internal Displacement is a significant issue in Nigeria, particularly in the North Central region, where conflicts between farmers and herders have led to the displacement of thousands of people. Benue State, located in the North Central region of Nigeria, has been particularly affected by this crisis, with many of its residents forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The challenges of rehabilitating and reintegrating these IDPs back into society are numerous and complex, requiring a multi-faceted approach to address the need of this vulnerable population.

One of the primary challenges of rehabilitating IDPs in Benue State is the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources in the camps where they are housed. Many of these camps lack basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare services, making it difficult for IDPs to maintain their health and well-being. Additionally, the overcrowded conditions in these camps can lead to increased tensions and conflicts among residents, further exacerbating the trauma experienced by those who have been displaced (Adeleke, & Olanrewaju, 2021).

Another challenge is the psychological impact of displacement on IDPs, many of whom have experienced trauma and loss as a result of the conflict (Ogundele, & Abiodun, 2018). Mental

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health services are often lacking in the camps, leaving IDPs without the support they need to cope with their experiences. This can lead to long-term psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, making it difficult for IDPs to reintegrate into society once they leave the camps (Ogundele, & Abiodun, 2018).

CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATION

Reintegrating IDPs back into their communities is another significant challenge in Benue State. Many IDPs have lost their homes, livelihoods, and social networks as a result of displacement, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives once they return to their communities. Discrimination and stigmatization against IDPs can also hinder their reintegration, as community members may view them with suspicion or resentment (Smith, 2020). Additionally, the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders in Benue State can make it unsafe for IDPs to return to their homes, as they may face further violence and displacement. This insecurity can prevent IDPs from rebuilding their lives and accessing the resources they need to thrive in their communities.

According to Smith there are several challenges that IDPs face in Nigeria, including:

Economic reintegration: IDPs struggle to regain their sources of income, particularly in rural areas where they rely on farming or small businesses. Access to land, capital, and markets is often limited.

Social reintegration: Many IDPs face social stigmatization, making it hard to rebuild relationships or gain acceptance in host communities. The disruption of traditional family structures and networks compounds this issue.

Access to basic services: Reintegration is hampered by the lack of access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing. The infrastructure in affected areas is often damaged or overwhelmed by the needs of both the local population and IDPs.

Security concerns: The ongoing insecurity in conflict zones, especially in Nigeria's North Central and Northeastern regions, hinders the sustainable return or relocation of IDPs. Reintegration cannot succeed unless IDPs feel safe in their communities.

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Smith also discusses strategies to enhance reintegration, such as collaborative efforts between government agencies, international organizations, and local communities to create programs that support economic development, provide psychosocial support, and strengthen community resilience.

The challenge of rehabilitating and reintegrating IDPs in Benue State are numerous and complex, requiring a coordinated effort from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community members to address the needs of this vulnerable population (Doe, 2021). Providing adequate infrastructure, resources, and support services in IDP camps is essential to ensuring the health and well-being of displaced persons. Additionally, efforts to address the psychological impact of displacement and combat discrimination against IDPs are crucial for their successful reintegration into society (Doe, 2021). By addressing these challenges and working together to support IDPs, we can help them rebuild their lives and contribute to the peace and stability of Benue State.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Population movements or migrations can take two forms – voluntary migration and involuntary or forced migration. As early as the 1880s, a British scholar, E.G. Ravenstein analyzed population movements within England (Broek and Webb 1973:490). He came up with several laws; but the best-known states that the number of migrants decreases as distance increases. In subsequent years, Torsten Hagerstrand and his associates also developed some other models to account for population movements. Several American geographers also engaged in this line of research. Some used gravity models to describe and predict movements between areas in terms of mass population, distance and relations between the two. Of the two types of migrations pointed to above, voluntary migration or what Prothero called regular migration (Prothero 1987: 1282) involves a permanent change in place of residence in which the decision to move has been taken in circumstances offering the migrant relatively free choice. While the second type of migration that is *forced/involuntary or irregular migration* because of the nature of the movement of the people which as to do with war, conflict, ecological disasters, generalization violence etc. This type of migration involves a change of residence under pressure which may therefore not be wholly permanent but may involve further movement, whose timing and

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direction are uncertain. Inherent in this is the idea that forces (war, conflict, ecological disasters and so on) being an external factor affecting a person acts as a push factor leading him to decide to leave their country and settle elsewhere.

Forced Migration Theory

Forced Migration Theory postulates that individuals are compelled to leave their habitual dwellings due to life-threatening circumstances, jeopardizing their safety and security. This theory captures external factors driving displacement, such as armed conflict, natural disasters, and government-led development projects. However, applying this theory to the context of Benue State provides deeper insights into the specific displacement trends and vulnerabilities unique to this region.

In Benue State, herder-farmer conflicts, exacerbated by ecological challenges such as desertification and limited arable land, have caused widespread displacement (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2020). Forced Migration Theory helps contextualize these movements by identifying structural violence and insecurity as critical factors driving displacement. Moreover, vulnerabilities among IDPs, including lack of access to housing, education, and healthcare, reflect the intersection of forced migration and systemic neglect, highlighting the need for tailored interventions.

Social Inclusion Theory

The concept of social inclusion, rooted in the French term *les exclus*, was popularized in the 1970s by René Lenoir (Robo, 2014). Social Inclusion Theory emphasizes integrating individuals or groups into society, ensuring equal opportunities to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. In the context of displacement, this theory underscores the importance of reintegrating IDPs into societal structures and addressing systemic barriers to participation.

While the paper mentions social inclusion as vital to reintegration, a deeper exploration of practical implementation is necessary within Benue State's socio-economic landscape. For example, policies focusing on community-driven development, vocational training, and access to microfinance could empower IDPs to rebuild their livelihoods. Comparative examples, such as the reintegration of IDPs in Sudan and Somalia, demonstrate the effectiveness of holistic social inclusion strategies. In Sudan, targeted efforts to involve displaced populations in agricultural

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programs have improved food security and social cohesion. Similarly, Somalia's emphasis on community reconciliation programs has fostered trust among displaced and host communities. These models offer valuable lessons for Nigeria's policymakers in addressing the unique challenges of IDPs in Benue State.

Human Security Theory

Proposed by Mahbub ul Haq in 1995, Human Security Theory (HST) marked a paradigm shift from state-centric to individual-centric security (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994). Human security encompasses various dimensions, including personal security, community security, and economic security, prioritizing the well-being, safety, and dignity of individuals over traditional national security concerns.

Introducing Human Security Theory provides a broader lens to analyze the multidimensional challenges faced by IDPs in Benue State. For instance, personal security concerns, such as the risk of violence in camps, highlight the precarious living conditions of displaced populations. Community security issues, including strained relationships between IDPs and host communities, underline the importance of fostering social cohesion. Economic security remains a pressing concern, as many IDPs lack access to stable income sources or basic resources, further marginalizing them within society. By addressing these interconnected threats, Human Security Theory enriches the analysis and provides a comprehensive framework for formulating interventions that prioritize the holistic well-being of IDPs.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The empirical review provides an extensive analysis of the challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), management efforts, and the impacts of displacement. To enhance clarity and analytical depth, the findings are organized into thematic categories, incorporating both localized and global perspectives.

Infrastructure Challenges

Inadequate shelter, sanitation, and access to clean water are persistent issues in IDP camps. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA, 2022), over 60% of IDP

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camps in Nigeria lack proper sanitation facilities, leading to frequent disease outbreaks. In Benue State, conflicts between herders and farmers have destroyed critical infrastructure, leaving many IDPs without basic amenities. Similarly, a study by Shuaibu et al. (2020) revealed that 68% of surveyed IDPs in the state live in overcrowded shelters with limited access to potable water, exacerbating health risks. Addressing these infrastructure deficiencies is critical to improving living conditions for IDPs.

Psychological Impacts

The psychological toll of displacement on IDPs is profound. Okonkwo et al. (2021) found that 70% of IDPs in Benue State exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, stemming from experiences of violence and the trauma of displacement. This aligns with findings from Omorogiwa et al. (2020), who emphasized that prolonged displacement without adequate mental health support worsens psychological distress. Despite these findings, access to professional psychological services remains scarce, highlighting an urgent need for targeted interventions, such as counseling and trauma-focused therapy, to address the mental health needs of IDPs.

Security Concerns

Security remains a major concern for IDPs, both within camps and in host communities. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) reported that over 40% of IDPs in Nigeria experienced violence or harassment in camps. In Benue State, tensions between IDPs and host communities over scarce resources have further heightened security risks (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2020). Effective security measures, including deploying community-based policing and improving camp management systems, are crucial for fostering safer environments for IDPs.

Localized Evidence

While much literature addresses general IDP challenges, localized evidence offers specific insights into the unique socio-political dynamics of Benue State. Reports from the Benue Humanitarian Response Initiative (BHRI, 2023) emphasize how resource allocation conflicts and political instability hinder effective IDP management. For example, the mismanagement of

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humanitarian aid, as documented by Odozi et al. (2022), has deepened the vulnerability of IDPs in the region. Incorporating such localized data strengthens the analysis and highlights the need for region-specific interventions tailored to Benue's socio-political realities.

Critical Analysis of Literature

Although existing studies provide valuable insights, they are not without limitations. Many studies rely on small sample sizes, making it difficult to generalize findings. For instance, Okonkwo et al.'s (2021) study on psychological impacts included only 150 participants, limiting its scope. Additionally, the absence of longitudinal data prevents a comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of displacement. A critical evaluation of these gaps underscores the need for more robust research methodologies, including longitudinal studies and larger, more diverse samples, to deepen our understanding of IDP experiences over time.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study therefore adopts two theories which are the theory of Forced Migration and theory of Social Inclusion.

The Forced Migration theory can be traced to the establishment of the League of Nations and its High Commissioner for Refugees in 1921 as a reaction to the large scale displacement caused by the 1917 Russian Revolution and the oppression of the Jews by the Nazis in Germany and with the dissolution of the League of Nations and the Second World War, over 30 million people were displaced hence the creation of the United Relief and Reconstruction Agency (UNRRA) in 1944 (Benz & Hasenclever, 2009). Forced migration theory entails the involuntary movement of people from their places of habitual residence as a result of events which are threatening to their lives or their safety (Benz & Hasenclever, 2009). Prior to the Cold War, trends in the number of people seeking political asylum from their countries were alarming not until the end of the Cold War that the trend took another perspective to include numbers of people seeking refuge in their own countries as a result of being displaced by one activity of the government or the other. From the above it can be deduced that categories of person who are internally displaced include those displaced by armed conflict, natural disasters, environmental disasters as well as developmental projects.

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Historical antecedent of population movements is punctuated by human crises such as among the Diaspora of the Jews, the expulsion of the Huguenots from France and the deportation of American Indians from their tribal territories. Internal conflicts in Nigeria have forced thousands of people out of their homes. Over 500,000 Tivs were said to be displaced from Nasarrawa and Taraba states in the Tiv-Jukun clash. Conflicts in Ife-Modakeke, Zango Kataf, Kafanchan, Tafawa Balewa, Umuleri-Aguleri, ZakiBiam, Idi-Araba, the 27 January 2002 bomb blast in Lagos have produced thousands of internally displaced persons in several parts of the country (Schultheis 1989:3) and the recent severe flooding between August and September 2024 as produced over 1.3million of internally displaced persons in several parts of the country. (International Rescue Committee September 2, 2024)

However, over the years, observers have suggested that forced displacement and refugees are the result of one or more of the following factors: dissolution of a century of colonial rule; post-independent realignment of political and economic forces; misguided development policies; bureaucratic ineptitude and corruption and unfavourable climate and weather conditions (Schultheis 1989:3)

It is on this note that the second theory, the theory of Social Inclusion is adopted for the research. The Social Inclusion theory is concerned with groups of people who need assistance due to their prevailing situation. The theory is easily associated with ‘Social Exclusion’ as a theory and is traced to the French notion of *les exclus* in 1970 with the authorship of the expression credited to René Lenoir (Robo, 2014). This theory postulates that in a socially inclusive society, everyone is valued and their basic needs are supplied to them. This in turn leads to a sense of belonging amongst the people. However, there are some values that form the basis of the social inclusion theory such as: everyone needs support, can learn, can contribute, can communicate, is ready and together we are better (Robo, 2014). Social inclusion is a result of the action taken positively to change the circumstances of these people. In a lighter form, social inclusion is the opposite effect to the social exclusion theory (Charity Commission, 2001). This theory is best understood when explaining social exclusion theory as both theories are ‘the inseparable side of the same coin’ (Robo, 2014). The Social Inclusive theory is apt for the purpose of this study as it supports the integration of the internally displaced persons into the

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larger society. In Nigeria, if the internally displaced persons are well integrated into the society, this alignment would allow for better management of the crisis and enhanced rehabilitation of IDPs in Benue State.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In summary, a thorough examination of the difficulties in rehabilitating and reintegrating internally displaced people (IDPs) in Benue State, Nigeria, reveals a troubling reality where numerous intricate issues have impeded long-term solutions to internal displacement. Attacks and banditry are frequently the result of long-standing tensions between farmers and herders, ethnic groups, and religious organizations. For example, conflicts between farmers and herders, intercommunal conflicts, and natural catastrophes account for 59% of the displacements in these areas (IOM, 2023).

This vulnerable population faces a complex web of issues that require rapid attention and coordinated efforts from humanitarian groups, local authorities, and international agencies. The government has failed to meet expectations in supporting sustainable reintegration pathways. In addition to these difficulties, there are major problems with land access for sustained local integration or sustainable integration in another region of the country, as states frequently dispute the rights to land for IDPs.

The results emphasize the lack of response to this conflict, which draws attention to the discrepancy between policy and practice brought about by a lack of coordination amongst international humanitarian and development players, NGOs, and government agencies. Therefore, there is a pressing need for comprehensive solutions that go beyond temporary relief measures. In addition to upsetting lives, the widespread effects of violence on relocation have increased vulnerabilities and exposed internally displaced people to numerous dangers.

According to the study, many internally displaced people have chosen to live in urban and semi-urban Local Government Areas (LGAs) where there is limited access to basic services and absorption capacities. This has led to integration difficulties and tensions in host communities, frequently involving land for integration, resource planning, absorption capacities, and limited access to basic infrastructure and services. Due to their prolonged relocation, labor markets and

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resources are under tremendous strain, and unemployment rates are high, especially for women, teenagers, and individuals with special needs.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN BENUE STATE

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Benue State face multifaceted challenges in their rehabilitation and reintegration processes. The scale of displacement in Benue State is significant, primarily due to persistent conflicts, particularly the farmers-herders crisis. According to a report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Nigeria had over 3.2 million IDPs as of 2022, with Benue State accounting for a substantial portion of this figure. An estimated 1.5 million people in Benue were displaced between 2017 and 2022 due to violent conflicts (IDMC, 2022). These figures highlight the urgent need for effective strategies to address the plight of IDPs in the state.

Access to basic services remains a critical concern for displaced individuals in Benue State. A study by Egwu (2021) revealed that only 30% of IDPs have access to adequate shelter, while 20% reported access to clean drinking water. These statistics underscore the limited resources allocated to IDP camps and the need for infrastructural development. Furthermore, less than 15% of displaced children have access to formal education due to the insufficient number of schools within camps (Egwu, 2021). Such conditions reflect the systemic challenges in providing fundamental rights and services to displaced persons.

Health and psychosocial support are also severely lacking among IDPs in Benue State. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates that 40% of IDPs suffer from mental health challenges, yet only 10% receive professional care (UNHCR, 2022). This gap is primarily attributed to the lack of trained personnel and inadequate facilities dedicated to mental health services. Addressing this shortfall is essential for the holistic well-being of displaced individuals.

Economic reintegration poses another significant challenge. According to a survey by Olayemi and Akinyemi (2022), 70% of IDPs in Benue are unemployed or underemployed, primarily due to limited vocational training and job opportunities. Only 25% of IDPs reported participating in

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any skill acquisition programs during their displacement. This economic marginalization hinders their ability to achieve self-sufficiency and reintegrate effectively into society.

Food security is a pressing issue within IDP camps. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023) found that 60% of IDPs in Benue face food insecurity, with malnutrition rates among children under five exceeding 20%. Humanitarian aid meets less than 50% of the food requirements in camps, leaving many vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. Such alarming figures call for immediate and sustained interventions to ensure adequate nutrition for displaced individuals.

The return and reintegration of IDPs into their communities remain fraught with challenges. Egwu (2021) estimated that only 10% of IDPs have successfully returned to their communities due to unresolved security concerns and disputes over land ownership. These barriers hinder the transition from displacement to stability and self-reliance.

Quantitative evaluations reveal that Nigeria's National Policy on IDPs lags in aligning with international frameworks such as the Kampala Convention. For instance, the Kampala Convention emphasizes access to adequate housing and sustainable livelihoods for IDPs. However, only 30% of IDPs in Benue report living in satisfactory housing conditions, which is far below international recommendations (IDMC, 2022). On health, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends mental health service coverage of at least 60% for displaced populations. Benue's current rate of 10% highlights a significant gap (UNHCR, 2022).

Implementation of effective interventions is hampered by several challenges. Funding deficits are a major obstacle. A budget analysis by the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) showed that only 40% of the required funds for IDP support programs were allocated in 2022. This underfunding constrains access to essential services. Additionally, coordination inefficiencies among stakeholders lead to duplication of efforts. A 2021 report by ActionAid Nigeria highlighted overlapping projects in six IDP camps, leaving other camps underserved. Inadequate data systems further exacerbate the situation. A review by Olayemi and Akinyemi (2022) found that 70% of IDP-related programs in Benue lack reliable data for planning and evaluation, hindering effective intervention strategies.

To address these challenges, several recommendations can be implemented. Increasing resource allocation is critical, with a target to ensure that at least 80% of displaced persons have access to

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clean water, education, and healthcare within the next three years. Establishing vocational training programs can help address unemployment, with an aim to enroll 50% of IDPs in such programs by 2025. Developing comprehensive data systems to monitor IDP demographics, service access, and program outcomes is also vital. Enhanced stakeholder collaboration is necessary to streamline coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations. Lastly, adopting international best practices by prioritizing housing, mental health services, and sustainable livelihoods can significantly improve the situation.

In conclusion, quantitative data underscores the critical gaps in the rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs in Benue State. Addressing these challenges requires evidence-based policies, adequate funding, and effective collaboration. By leveraging data-driven approaches and international best practices, stakeholders can significantly improve the welfare of IDPs and ensure a more sustainable solution to their plight.

POLICY ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON IDPS: ALIGNMENT, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, especially in Benue State, face severe challenges due to recurring conflicts and natural disasters. The **National Policy on IDPs**, though commendable, struggles with practical implementation, particularly in adhering to international standards like the **Kampala Convention**. This essay critically evaluates the policy's alignment with international guidelines, explores its current implementation challenges, and proposes practical steps for improvement. The focus on Benue State highlights localized issues while addressing national concerns.

Alignment with the Kampala Convention

The **Kampala Convention**, ratified by Nigeria in 2012, is Africa's first binding treaty addressing internal displacement. It emphasizes prevention, protection, and durable solutions for IDPs. Nigeria's National Policy on IDPs incorporates these principles but exhibits significant gaps:

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Legal and Institutional Frameworks

While the policy aligns conceptually with the Kampala Convention, it lacks the legal force needed for robust enforcement. A clear delineation of responsibilities across federal, state, and local governments remains absent, leading to coordination issues (Oduwole & Fadeyi, 2013).

Focus on Prevention and Durable Solutions

Preventive measures and strategies for durable solutions, such as voluntary return, resettlement, and local integration, are not effectively operationalized. The absence of preventive mechanisms is evident in recurring crises like the **farmers-herders' conflicts** that continue to displace populations in Benue State.

Current Implementation Challenges

Inadequate Funding:

Insufficient budget allocations have left IDP camps in deplorable conditions, with limited access to healthcare, education, and psychosocial support (OCHA, 2022). The lack of financial resources also affects infrastructure development for reintegration efforts.

Weak Data Management:

The absence of a centralized database hinders effective planning and evaluation. Accurate data on the number of IDPs, their needs, and their locations are crucial for targeted interventions (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

Fragmented Coordination:

Overlapping mandates between government agencies and NGOs result in resource duplication and inefficiency. Coordination failures delay critical responses during emergencies.

Security Concerns:

Ongoing violence, particularly from communal clashes, exacerbates displacement and undermines resettlement efforts. Security for IDPs and their communities remains a critical gap.

Neglect of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:

Despite the widespread trauma experienced by IDPs, mental health services are grossly inadequate. This neglect has long-term implications for reintegration and community stability.

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Recommendations for Policy Improvement

Codification of the Policy

The National Policy on IDPs should be transformed into binding legislation to ensure enforcement and accountability. This legal backing would clarify roles, secure funding, and streamline coordination.

Increased Funding

Collaborate with international donors and private sectors to secure sustainable funding. Resources should prioritize healthcare, education, and mental health services.

Development of a Centralized Data System

Establish a centralized database for tracking IDPs and monitoring interventions. Data-driven decision-making will enhance efficiency and transparency.

Enhanced Security Measures

Partner with security agencies to protect IDPs and prevent further displacement. Deploy peacekeeping forces in conflict-prone areas and address the root causes of communal conflicts.

Community Participation

Engage IDPs and host communities in decision-making processes. Community-led initiatives can foster trust and ensure interventions meet actual needs.

Addressing Land Disputes:

Implement clear policies to resolve land disputes for returning IDPs. Equitable land allocation is critical for sustainable reintegration.

Alignment with International Standards

Establish a task force to ensure the policy aligns with the **Kampala Convention** and other international guidelines. Regular reviews and updates will address emerging challenges.

RECOMMENDATION

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The paper concludes that the Benue State government has not lived up to expectations in the rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs. Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are proposed:

Implement Specific and Actionable Interventions: Establish mobile health units for mental health support to ensure at least 30% coverage within two years. Additionally, initiate targeted vocational training programs aiming to enroll 50% of IDPs in skill acquisition by 2025. Collaborate with international NGOs and funding agencies to secure necessary resources for these programs.

Promote Feasible and Sustainable Solutions: Create a conducive environment for sustainable, voluntary, safe, and dignified solutions for IDPs through voluntary return, local integration, and settlement elsewhere. Address budgetary constraints and regional security risks by prioritizing resource allocation and forming security partnerships with local authorities and international bodies.

Enhance Resource Allocation: Ensure that at least 80% of displaced persons have access to clean water, education, and healthcare within the next three years. Strengthen partnerships to resolve the farmers-herders crisis, facilitating the return of IDPs to their communities.

Develop Comprehensive Data Systems: Implement robust data collection systems to monitor IDP demographics, service access, and program outcomes. Use this data to inform planning and evaluation processes, ensuring targeted and effective interventions.

Focus on Measurable Outcomes: Frame each recommendation within an evaluative framework by defining measurable indicators, such as achieving a 30% increase in mental health service coverage or enrolling 50% of IDPs in vocational programs within specific timelines. This approach allows policymakers to track progress effectively and adjust strategies as needed.

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Adopt International Best Practices: Align policies with the Kampala Convention and prioritize initiatives for adequate housing, mental health services, and sustainable livelihoods to improve living conditions and self-sufficiency among IDPs.

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