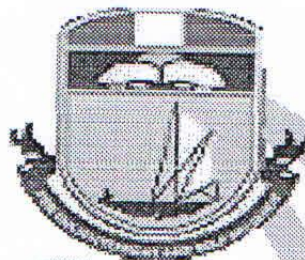


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**SCHOOL-RELATED PROBLEMS OF DISPLACED ADOLESCENTS AS
EXPRESSED BY THEIR PARENTS IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS
CAMP IN NORTH-EAST, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Internal displacement, resulting from insurgency has emerged the worst human tragedy ravaging the North-East, Nigeria since 2009; with much effect on women and young persons. The education of the school-going adolescents has been mostly affected because many school-going adolescents lived for long time in various Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps where school activities are often virtually difficult. This study therefore investigated school-related problems of displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in IDPs' camps in North-East, Nigeria. Thus, the population for the study consists of all displaced parents in IDPs' camps in North-East, Nigeria while a total of 43 participants were selected using purposive sampling technique. The quantitative method was adopted using both the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Individual Interview techniques in two camps. The findings revealed that the major school-related problems of displaced school-going adolescents as expressed by their parents are: inability to participate in classroom activities; inability to write examinations conducted by external bodies such as the Junior and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations; and inability to access educative materials. The study thus recommended that: mobile school service should be made available for school-going adolescents in IDP camps; and Examination Agencies should be mandated to conduct examinations for displaced school-going adolescents at possible time.

Keywords: *School-related problems, School-going Adolescents, Internally Displaced Persons IDP Camps, Parents.*

Introduction

Education is basically a fundamental right of every child which is expected to be provided and protected by the government and every designated stakeholder. Recognizing the significance of education to the development of individuals, potential and the positive effects on meaningful development in the society, the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 26 stated that everyone has the right to education. In addition, education shall be directed to full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (UNICEF, 2010). Consequent upon this declaration, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) recognises education as an instrument per excellence for national development. It is imperative to infer at this juncture that the most organized and effective means of providing education to the young ones is through schooling. School activities entail inculcating the right values and attitude to the learners and as well as discovering and developing their potentials. Conversely, many school-age children, particular the adolescents in the North-East Nigeria have been deprived their rights of participating in school activities as a result of incessant displacement occasioned by insurgency in the region. A large number of school-going adolescents have deserted their communities (where their schools are located) to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps where normal schooling is either totally impossible or skeletally carried out.

The phenomenon of internal displacement has taken the worst dimension in the North East Nigeria since 2014. Generally, people have been forced to leave their homes and communities in response to various attacks by the insurgents particularly the Boko Haram group. As of December 2014, a total number of registered IDPs in three states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe in North Eastern Nigeria was 868,235 (United National High Commission for Refugees, 2014). A more recent figure by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in conjunction with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) revealed a total number of IDPs as of July 2015 to be about 1.4 million in six Northern States, which are Borno (1,002,688), Yobe (125,484), Adamawa (113,437), Bauchi (76,504), Gombe (16,984) and Taraba (20,501) (Francisco, 2015). Although figures on internal displacement have limitations due to some reasons; figures are often only available after large-scale crises, information is anecdotal and primarily about the minority of IDPs who live in camps, yet, studies in Durosaro & Ajiboye (2011) and Ajiboye (2013) have shown that there are always more children (including adolescents) and women in camps than other groups. Ajiboye (2013) attributed the reason for the variation to the vulnerability of children and women; they lack ability and skills required to build self-defence and tolerance to face threats thus often resort to fleeing to camps. The reports of IOM and NEMA revealed that children of less than 18 years of age constitute 56 percent of the IDP population in the North Eastern Nigeria (Francisco, 2015). This revelation depicts a pathetic situation of a halt to schooling activities of these school-age young persons.

The involuntary movement of the growing individuals (adolescents) has its attendant consequences. As they have been compelled to leave their homes or communities, the displaced adolescents are faced with threats to their physical security and integrity, a lack of access to basic necessities such as water, food, shelter and health care, and to the livelihoods which would improve

their standard of living (Durosaro & Ajiboye, 2011). Apart from these general consequences, Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011) identified educational problems as being the major consequence on internally displaced adolescents in Jos metropolis. Thus, the experience in the north eastern Nigeria could be similar when one considers the spate of attacks on communities and the subsequent large-scale human displacement that follows, which include the school-going adolescents. The activities of the insurgents which continuously prevent access to educational activities are completely a violation of human rights.

On many occasions government provides some interventions to cushion the effects of the displacement on victims. Early in 2015, NEMA stated that it has established 25 camps across north-east region: 10 IDPs' camps in Borno State, 14 in Adamawa and 1 in Gombe. In addition, relief materials were provided to support the IDPs in camps (Ezeobi, 2015). However, the major flaw of the intervention programme by various agencies is the exclusion of educational programme for school-going adolescents in IDP camps. Ajiboye (2013) found that concentration of intervention is usually placed on food items, shelter and health care services but with exclusion of learning materials or mobile school activities for school-going persons. Such deprivation may have lasting effects on the adolescents because they might have been denied the opportunities to complete their studies on record time as well as not been able to participate in various examinations.

During displacement, both parents and children are often affected because both groups often found in IDP camps. These parents spend more time with the adolescent than the relief workers and thus would understand their problems better than any other persons or groups. This study therefore considered it imperative to investigate school-related problems of internally displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in North Eastern Nigeria with a view to suggesting solutions to the identified problems.

Statement of the Problem

Internal displacement has appeared as one of the worst human tragedy particularly in the north eastern region of Nigeria. The phenomenon which results from insurgency and generalised violation of human rights has led to the closure of schools and thus preventing the school-going adolescents from gaining access to educational activities. The saddening part of the scenario is the fact that the examination bodies/agencies and other stakeholders in education industry have not at any time alter the academic calendar nation-wide in response to the displaced school-going adolescents who are disadvantaged because of displacement. Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011) has early found educational problem as being the most significant challenges of both male and female internally displaced adolescents in Jos metropolis. Similarly, Ajiboye (2013) found that IDPs in Nigeria expressed emotional, health and educational problems as being the challenges they encountered, irrespective of the patterns of displacement. The present study, having considered the massive displacement, destruction of school buildings and academic activities in north eastern Nigeria, considered it important to investigate school-related problems of internally displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in IDP camps in north-eastern Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study, thus:

- i. What are the major school-related problems of internally displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in IDP camps?
- ii. To what extent has the school-related problems affected displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in camps?

Purpose of the Study

The study was set to find out the school-related problems of internally displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents.

Methodology

The researchers adopted the qualitative method for the study. The Focus Group Discussion and Individual Interview techniques were employed to collect the required information. The researchers purposively selected two IDP camps to conduct the study. The two camps were in Bauchi and in Yobe States: Bauchi town and Portuskum respectively. The two locations were considered because they were savor and had large number of displaced persons, especially children below 18 years old and their parents. The purposive sampling was also used to select 43 participants for the study (i.e. 23 at Bauchi and 20 at Portuskum from each of the IDP Camp). There were two FGDs which involved 20 members in each while 3 individuals were interviewed separately. The responses of participants were subsequently reported in the study.

Discussion of Findings

Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Camp	23	53.50
Bauchi	20	46.50
Portuskum	43	100.00

The distribution in Table 1 shows that the participants were almost evenly selected across the camps.

The results of the FGD in IDP camp in Bauchi revealed that the major school-related problem of internally displaced school-going adolescents as reported by their parents in camps are inability to access educational materials. A participant thus reported:

My children come to me everyday asking how they could get textbooks and writing materials to do private study in camp. Each time they brought relief materials, my children looked anxiously to see if educational (stationery) materials were included. They often got disappointed (A 52 year old mother of 3 school-going adolescents in Bauchi).

This was corroborated by another participant in Portuskom Camp, Yobe State who said:

Look at my children (pointing to them under a tree) sitting disappointedly because they could not lay hands on any book to study since they came to the camp. Sometime they shed tears just because they were deprived of access to school materials. (A 47 years old mother of 4 school-going adolescents).

The various reports of parents who participated in the FGD Camps reflected similar issue on inability of their children to access educational materials. This revealed that government and other stakeholders saddled with the responsibility of providing succor for IDPs did not factor the provision of educational materials into their services. This finding is similar to the earlier study of Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011) where internally displaced adolescents in Jos metropolis equally identified educational problem as being their major challenge in IDP camps. The situation has become a worry to parents who were equally displaced.

Another major school-related problem that was expressed by majority of the participants in the two camps was inability of their children to participate in classroom activities. A participant reported that:

It is grossly unfair and worrisome that my children are wasting their time here (in IDP camps) without participating in class work like other children. Each day passed without teaching and learning because there is no teacher nor classroom for them to stay (A 45 years old man in Bauchi Camp).

Another participant reported that:

My major concern is how to get my children back to class since there is no hope that government or volunteers would make arrangement for the education of our children in camps. We only received food and clothing but our children are not happy because they are not in school. (A 61 year old mother of 3 school-going adolescents in Bauchi Camp).

In another report, a participant stated that:

See the young ones (pointing to some boys and girls) just talking aimlessly without learning like other children that are in schools. I am very worried because that may contribute to their failure when eventually they go back to school. (A 39 years old male parent in Portuskum camp).

Inferring from the various expressions obtained during the FGDs, one may state that inability of adolescents to participate in classroom activities was another major school-related problems expressed by their parents. This also supports the early finding of Dada (2008) where educational problem was prominent among refugees in Oru Camp, Ogun State, Nigeria. This shows that school-going adolescents did not enjoy mobile school service, a type that is provided for nomadic herdsman, who are always on move.

Another problem identified by participants, particularly during individual interview session was the inability of school-going adolescents to participate in examinations conducted by external bodies. Here are reports of two participants:

It is clear that these children have been denied the chance of writing both the junior and senior secondary school certificate examinations which might be beyond the control of the management of their schools. It is automatically a setback which the government has not noticed (A 55 year old male participant in Bauchi).

Another participant reported that:

This situation has caused a lot of damages to the education of these young ones because they might have to repeat both JSS III and SSS III classes since they are likely to have missed both examinations which are conducted by external bodies (A 52 year old female participant).

The expression of participants here identified inability to write examinations conducted by external examination bodies, such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) as being a major school-related problem of internally displaced adolescents. This shows that probably the stakeholders in the management of internal displacement in Nigeria have not made such case to external examination agencies. On the other hand, it could be that the voice of the victims, both the parents and the school-going adolescent has not be heard to warrant a quick action that would have save the situation.

Conclusion

This study has identified three major school-related problems of internally displaced adolescents as expressed by their parents in IDP camps in North-Eastern, Nigeria. These problems are inability to access educational materials (textbooks and writing materials), inability to participate in classroom activities and inability to write examinations conducted by external bodies such as WAEC. Unless these issues are adequately addressed the displaced school-going adolescents stand the risk of becoming dropout, or becoming frustrated after being forced to repeat a class for not participating in examinations. In addition, parents stand the risk of wasting their resources on children whose education would be jeopardized as a result of displacement. On a whole, the country stands the risk of losing its potential if the school-related problems of displaced adolescents are not adequately handled.

Recommendations

Based in the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Mobile school services should be made available for school-going adolescents in IDP camps.
- Educational materials should always be included in the relief materials provided for IDPs in camps especially where there are school-going adolescents.
- Examination bodies/agencies such as WAEC, National Examinational Council (NECO) and State Examinations bodies should be mandated to always conduct examinations for displaced school-going adolescents whenever possible.
- The Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and other similar organizations should always provide educational services (information) to displaced adolescents in IDP camps.
- The parents of the displaced school-going adolescents in IDP camps should always give words of hope to their children whenever they appear worried about their school-related problems while in IDP camps.

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