

How Can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land? Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the Government's Response in Benue Nigeria

Abstract

The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across the globe, especially in developing countries, is increasing on a daily basis. Additionally, the conditions of these IDPs continue to raise questions. Governments across the globe and Nigeria in particular have responded to these challenges, but the situation is far from amelioration. Against this backdrop, this study examined the root cause, nature and challenges of the IDPs, government interventions and the IDPs response in Benue, Nigeria. This paper argues that various interventions are laudable, but is by no means a solution. It is better understood as a specific response to a man-made and natural driven conflict that requires a broader, inclusive and sustainable resolution.

Keywords: Miyetti Allah, Herdsmen/Farmers Conflict, IDPs, Anti-Grazing Bill, Cattle Rustling.

Introduction

One of the challenges facing most developing countries is conflict. This has further led to often overwhelming challenges, varying from loss of lives, livelihood, property, refugees, and human rights abuses to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), among others. The focus of this study is on the IDPs.

Ominously, the number of IDPs across the globe is increasing. The Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), revealed that an average of 21.5 million people have been displaced from their homes each year due to the rapid onset climate-related hazards since 2008.⁵ It further revealed that there was

1 Lecturer II, History & International Studies Unit, Department of Communication and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, e-mail: olakunleolasupo@yahoo.com.

2 Reader, History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

3 Senior Lecturer, History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

4 Reader, Philosophy Unit, Communication and General Studies Department, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

5 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016*, Switzerland: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), May 2016, pp. 20–21. <http://www.internaldisplacement.org/assets/publications/2016/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf> (accessed 12 January 2018).

an added displacement of 18,780.000 people by disaster and 11,774.000 by conflict in the world; of which, sub-Saharan Africa had 2,561.000 by disaster and 5,472.000 by conflict, thereby contributing 26.3% of the new total IDPs in the world as of 2017.⁶ It furthered that, of these, Nigeria accounted for 122,000, new displacement by conflict, and 279,000 displaced by disaster.⁷ These exponential numbers are coupled with the causes and dimensions associated with it.⁸ Hence, governments across the globe, and Nigeria in particular, have responded to these challenges in divergent ways through policies and peace-building initiatives and interventions. Despite these interventions, the challenges appear to be overwhelming and often insurmountable.

Against this backdrop, the aim of the study is to examine issues surrounding the IDPs in Benue, the objective being to answer the following questions: What are the root causes of the IDPs in Benue? What are the challenges faced by the IDPs? What ways have stakeholders, including the Federal Government of Nigeria, intervened and what have been the reactions of the IDPs to these?

Research Area and Methodology

The study examines Benue, Nigeria. Benue is one of the middle-belt states, situated in the north central region of Nigeria. The people of Benue are from different ethnic groups. They include Idoma, Tiv and Iggede, among others. The 2006 census puts the population of the State at 4,253,641, with a land size of 31,276.71 km² and a population density of 136.0 people/km².⁹ Due to its arable land for agricultural use, it has often been identified as the food basket of the

6 Global Report on Internal..., pp. 1–2.

7 Global Report on Internal..., pp. 2–4.

8 Jakob Kellenberger, 'Root Causes and Prevention of Internal Displacement: the ICRC Full Name Perspective,' Statement by Jakob Kellenberger, President of the ICRC, Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and IDP Full Names in Africa, Kampala, Uganda, 23 October, 2009, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/statement/displacement-statement-231009.htm> (accessed 12 January 2019); Sarah K. Lischer, 'Causes and Consequences of Conflict-Induced Displacement,' *Civil Wars*, Vol. 9, 2007, pp. 142–155; Patrick Vinck and Ed Bell, 'Violent Conflicts and Displacement in Central Mindanao: Challenges to Recovery and Development,' World Food Programme (WFP), World Bank Group (WBG) & Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), 2011, pp. 1–72, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/926381468333957708/pdf/681780v10WP0P100annexes0Full0report.pdf> (accessed 17 April 2019); Courtland W. Robinson, *Risks and Rights: The Causes, Consequences, and Challenges of Development-Induced Displacement*. An Occasional paper. Washington DC: The Brookings-SAIS, 2003; Omar Abdi, *Causes of Displacement and Protection Gaps in Somalia*, Mogadishu: CERPA, 2016, pp. 7–11; Mahendra P. Lama, 'Internal Displacement in India: Causes, Protection and Dilemma,' *Forced Migration Review*, 8, pp. 24–26; Katrina M. Powell, 'Rhetorics of Displacement: Constructing Identities in Forced Relocations,' *College English*, Vol. 74, No. 4, 2012, pp. 299–324.

9 National Population Commission (NPC), *2006 Population and Housing Census: Priority Table*, Vol. III, Abuja, Nigeria, 2010, pp. 35–36.

nation. It is this natural habitat, which endeared Benue to herders not only from the far north of the country, but also as far as West Africa regions.



Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing Benue State¹⁰

There are eight IDP Camps in Benue. The camps are: the LGEA and UNHCR Shelter Camp, Daudu; Guma Local Government Area; LGEA Primary School, Ugba, Logo LGA; Abeda Camp, Logo LGA; Anyiin Camp, Logo LGA; Abagena or Agan Camp, Logo LGA; Gbajimba Camp and Tse-Ginde Camp, Gumi LGA.¹¹ Two IDP Camps were selected as study areas: the Abagena and Daudu. The first non-participant observation was held in January, while the interviews commenced in both camps in August 2018. Data were translated descriptively. While some respondents gave their names, others did not or were deliberately tagged as key informants owing to being underage. The study is important for many reasons. Aside from the shifting attention of

10 'How Benue APC May have stumbled on completely undercutting Ethnicity,' *Intervention Journalism & Ethnicity*, 9 December 2018, <https://intervention.ng/14000/> (accessed 15 December 2019).

11 Peter Duru, 'Farmers/Herdsman Crisis: 80,450 Children Trapped in eight IDP Camps across Benue,' *Vanguard Newspaper*, 24 March 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/farmers-herdsman-crisis-80450-children-trapped-eight-idp-camps-across-benue/> (accessed 12 April 2019).

studies from the North-East¹² to the North-Central, it will add to knowledge on IDPs and their challenges. To achieve these objectives, the study engages in a qualitative methodology. It adopts the use of academic literature, media reports, non-participant observations and interviews.

Conflict, Internally Displaced Persons and Internal Displacement: Conceptual Clarifications

Conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people.¹³ It is believed to emanate when two or more groups engage in a struggle over values to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals.¹⁴ Though there is a general belief that conflict is as old as man and experienced throughout the world, the case of developing countries, especially in Africa, seems to be peculiar. Conflict has pervaded the African continent for the last three decades. In fact, over half of African countries had been affected by one form of conflict or another as of January 2000,¹⁵ with its causes varying across the globe.

There have also been debates as to a definite and all-encompassing definition for IDPs. Although no comparable international agreement exist for IDPs, a normative framework exists and has evolved. In 1992, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed a former Sudanese diplomat, Francis M. Deng as his representative on IDPs.¹⁶ Following years of collaborative work with stakeholders in international and regional organisations, in 1998 Deng presented the UN system with a working definition for IDPs as: “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence,

12 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ‘Internal Displacement in North East Nigeria: Operationalising the Kampala Convention in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States,’ Abuja: ICRC, 2016; Fatima K. Mohammed, ‘The Causes and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Nigeria and Related Governance Challenges,’ Working paper FG 8 April. Berlin, 2017, pp.1–39; Onaedo C. Ejiofor, Samuel. Oni and John V. Sejoro, ‘An Assessment of the Impact of Internal Displacement on Human Security in Northern Nigeria,’ *AUDRI*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2017, pp. 19–42; UNICEF, ‘WASH as a Cornerstone for Conquering the 2017 Cholera Outbreak in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria,’ 2018, <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1286/file> (assessed 12 April 2019).

13 Michael Nicholson, *Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

14 Lewis Coser, *The Function of Conflict*, New York: Free Press, 1956, p. 8; Ho-Won Jeong, *Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 3–6.

15 Department for International Development (DFID), *The Causes of Conflict in Africa: Consultation Document* UK: DFID, 2001, pp. 7–8; 13–15.

16 Robinson, *Risks and Rights...*, p. 2.

violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.”¹⁷

Asplet defines Internal Displacement as, “the involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups of persons within internationally recognised state borders.”¹⁸ He posits that it consists of three phases which are: pre-displacement, during displacement and post-displacement.¹⁹ He further defined the pre-displacement stage as when the state’s focus should be on preventing displacement from occurring; During the displacement phase the state focuses on protection and assistance for IDPs and affected communities, as well as steps to resolve the circumstances originally leading to the displacement; and the post-displacement phase is when the state begins to find durable solutions for the affected IDPs, delivering development, and humanitarian assistance and building sustainable livelihoods.²⁰

For this study, we define IDPs as groups of persons who are involuntarily or forcefully evicted from their homes to another place as a result of man-made or natural activities, but still within their national borders. It is instructive to note that conflicts are man-made and that natural disasters are sometimes influenced by human activities.²¹ Thus, we shall examine the causes and challenges of the IDPs in Benue, Nigeria.

The Causes of the Emergence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Benue

During British colonial rule, grazing routes were confined to the Northern part due to the specificities, in terms of economic survival, and cultural attachments of the Fulani ethnic group to nomadism as well as the incidences of trypanosomiasis in the southern part of Nigeria.²² However, with frequent drought and the desertification of the Sahara, the herdsmen began to move southwards.

After independence, while the administration of the northern region maintained the grazing routes for the group’s nomadic culture, owing to its increasing population, the other regional administrations, which included

17 Francis Deng, ‘Foreword,’ in *Handbook for Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), New York: Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1999, pp. i–iii.

18 Mike Asplet, *Internal Displacement; Responsibility and Action*, Geneva and New York: IPU & UNHCR, 2013, p. 18.

19 Asplet, *Internal Displacement...*, p. 18.

20 Asplet, *Internal Displacement...*, p. 18.

21 Abdi, *Causes of Displacement...*, p.4.

22 Stone Conroy, ‘Land Conflict and Lethal Violence in Nigeria; Patterns, Mapping and Evolution (2006–2014),’ *IFRA Working Paper Series*, No. 38, 2014, pp. 1–38.

western and eastern regions, only created grazing reserves in their respective domains to accommodate the Fulani Herdsmen. After the Civil War, and the creation of states, most of these reserves could no longer be sustained, managed, or increased, hence leading to the roaming of the herders to graze their herds, and a surge in the movement further down the southern part of Nigeria. Studies by the government of Nigeria show that the movement of the pastoralists in large numbers became visible in the 1970s.²³

Although in the course of these movements, the herders became victims of cattle rustlers, with many rustlers accused of killing the herders, stealing the cattle or both. Consequently, the herders became militarised by carrying arms to defend themselves²⁴ as well as maiming farmers who tried to stop them from feeding their herds on farms or who made attempts to scare their herds. Most of these herders, who are mostly Fulani, were under the umbrella of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), with a suspicion of having formed a Militia group to defend its interests. Though they remain the most populous, they are not the only ethnic group engaged in nomadic culture, as Arabs, Kanuri, Kanembu, Manga, Shuwa etc., are also involved.²⁵ In fact, some ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Iggede, Idoma, among others, sometimes, were indirectly involved by contracting some of these Fulani herders to help them rear herds, of which an amount is paid for such services.

The Benue conflict centres on resources, passage and culture. Notably, the most important possession in the Fulani society is cattle, to which many traditions, beliefs and taboos are attached.²⁶ It is in this context that Benue and its indigenous people found themselves. The conflict, known as the Herdsmen-farmers crisis, has over the years become the major source of conflicts in the state and the entire middle-belt region. Other fringe causes of the conflict are

23 Conroy, 'Land Conflict...', p. 6.

24 This should be the responsibility of the state, though the herders have taken it upon themselves and over the years, became un-checked. By this neglect of such illegal possession of arms, some of them became a threat to the communities where they grazed.

25 David Okwor, *The Political Economy of the Conflict between the Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen in the Contemporary Era of Climate Change in Nigeria*, an unpublished research paper in partial fulfilment of a Master Thesis, Institute of Social Sciences, 2016, p. 11; Roger Blench, 'Conflict Between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria,' *Review paper prepared for Department for International Development, (DFID)*, UK: Cambridge, 9 August 2010, pp. 2–3, <http://www.rogerblench.info/Development/Nigeria/Pastoralism/Fadama%20II%20paper.pdf> (accessed 15 February 2018); Ulrich Braukämper, 'Strategies of Environmental Adaptation and Patterns of Transhumance of the Shuwa Arabs in the Nigerian Chad Basin,' *Nomadic Peoples*, 1996, pp. 53–67.

26 Emmanuel O. Ojo, 'Nigeria's Democracy: the Trilemma of Herdsmenism, Terrorism and Vampirism,' *Inkanyiso: Journal of Hum & Soc. Sciences*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2017, p 15.

population growth, technological and economic changes, crime, political and ethnic strife, cultural changes.²⁷

In recent times, this conflict has led to an unprecedented increase in both human and capital losses. The conflict has largely affected the North-Central and Southern parts of Nigeria, and very few cases exist in the northern part. To be sure, some scholars in a study into the causes of conflicts in 27 communities in North-Central Nigeria, revealed that over 40% of the households surveyed had experienced agricultural land related conflicts, with respondents recalling conflicts dated as far back as 1965 and as recent as 2005.²⁸ To get a wider insight, an Intelligence think-tank, SBMorgen (SBM), revealed that, of the security challenges that faced Nigeria in 2016, the Boko Haram incidents account for 44%, with 38% fatalities; cattle rustling for 7% incidents, 15% fatalities; Fulani Herdsmen accounted for 29% incidents, 44% fatalities; and Niger-Delta Militancy accounted for 20% incidents, 3% fatalities. It further provided a tabular representation of the phenomenon, thus:

Security Challenges	No of Incidents	Fatalities	Average fatalities per Incident
Boko haram	71	1240	17
Cattle Rustling	12	470	39
Fulani Herdsmen	47	1425	30
Pastoral Conflict	59	1895	32
Niger Delta Militancy	32	97	3
Total	221	5127	121

Table 1. Representation of Nigeria's Security Threat²⁹

The table above is instructive, because it shows that the Fulani herdsmen and the pastoral conflict were two major determinants of the security threat facing the country in 2016. Although the Boko Haram challenges may have yielded

27 International Crisis Group, 'Herders Against Farmer: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict,' *Africa Report* N^o 252, 19 September 2017, Belgium: ICG, p. 3.

28 Anthony A. Nyong and Charles Fiki, 'Droughts-Related Conflicts, Management and Resolution in the West African Sahel,' *Human Security and Climate change International Workshop*, Oslo; GECHS, CICERO and PR20, 2005, pp. 5–16.

29 'A Look at Nigeria's Security Situation,' *SB Morgen Intelligence*, 2017, pp. 2–3, https://sbmintel.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/201701_Security-report.pdf (accessed 11 October 2019).

the highest number of incidents, its fatalities and average fatalities per incident were low. Be that as it may, most of these Farmer-Herder or Pastoral-Conflict attacks were caused as a result of reprisal attacks, thereby creating a cycle of recurrent conflict.³⁰ More so, such conflict has evolved from spontaneous reactions to provocations and on to deadlier planned attacks, particularly in the middle belt states of Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba.³¹ Hence, a conflict has that arose from arable crop farmers and cattle herdsman has become a recurrent predicament in many parts of Nigeria.³²

Undoubtedly, the herders mostly initiate or instigate the violence. For instance, a study of land use conflict in some northern parts revealed that, the actions of farmers constituted 40.9% and herder's actions amounted to 44.1%, which implies that herders were sometimes the instigators of a farmers-herders conflict. He furthered that intrusions on grazing reserves (31.7%) and encroachment on waterholes for cattle (9.2%) were actions that caused skirmishes, while deliberate grazing of cattle on crops (23.3%), and herders' indiscriminate bush burning (20.8%) often enraged the farmers.³³

These activities have had negative impacts on the farming communities. To be specific, in Benue it was reported that over 3,920 persons lost their lives in the Agatu massacres between 2013 and 2017, while about 2,000 others died at various IDP camps set up for the victims in parts of the state. Furthermore, the report stated that the militia invaded Benue on 12 May 2013 through Oweto and headed to Ekwo Okpanchenyi and Iwali as early as 7am, where women and children were hacked to death in their sleep. Such attacks were repeated on communities like Okwutanobe, Ekwuman, Ogwule Ankpa, Okpagabi, Ello, Ichogolugwu, Ogbagede, Enicha, Ejima 1 and Ejima 2, Ogbayi, Ogwumogbo among other communities between late 2013 and early 2017.³⁴

Consequent upon this, the Benue House of Assembly passed the Anti-Grazing law to resolve past problems of herders-farmers clashes in May 2017, but which came into effect on 1 November 2017. This may have contributed to

30 Mohammed, 'The Causes and Consequences...', p. 21.

31 International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spirally Farmer-Herder Violence,' *Africa Report* No. 262, 26 July 2018, Belgium: ICG, pp. i, 31.

32 Oluwasegun, A. Adekunle and Solagberu R. Adisa, 'An Empirical Phenomenological Psychological Study of Farmer-herdsmen conflicts in North-central Nigeria,' *Journal of Alternative Perspective in the Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010, p. 2.

33 Nathaniel O. Adeoye, 'Land Use Conflict Between Farmers and Herdsmen in Parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States of Nigeria: Nomads' Viewpoint,' *Ghana Journal of Geography*, Vol. 9, No.1, 2017, pp. 127-151.

34 Peter Duru, 'AGATU MASSACRES: We can forgive but won't forget how Fulani herdsmen killed 6,000 of our kinsmen—Locals,' *Vanguard Newspaper*, 5 February 2017, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/02/agatu-massacres-can-forgive-wont-forget-fulani-herdsmen-killed-6000-kinsmen-locals/> (accessed 14 April 2019).

the heightened tension.³⁵ For instance, members of the MACBAN outrightly rejected the law, arguing it was against their culture, economic interest and constitutional rights. They made threats to challenge the law from becoming effective through all legal means enshrined in the country's constitution. Thus, when attacks on the communities started, the herdsmen and their militia arm became the primary suspects by pundits. The attacks further led to loss of life, property and livelihood. For instance, the Benue state government revealed that the state had lost 1,878 lives in 2017 alone to the conflict, 222 disappeared and 750 grievously wounded (this includes 526 women, 200 (38%) of whom were pregnant and another 231 (44%) nursing mothers in the first quarter of 2018), and another 425 lost their lives people between January and May 2018; as well as over N400billion in property to the Herdsmen attack between 2015 and June 2018.³⁶ To understand this phenomenon, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) revealed that, 60% of the 169,922 people displaced by the conflict (which makes up around 102,000) were children forced out of school in Benue state alone in 2018.³⁷

There have been questions as to how the (Fulani Militias) mobilised themselves, strategised their attacks and left the scenes without being apprehended, even when at times security personnel were aware of such looming attacks or their presence. Some have suggested that the conflict has been politicised in such a way that security personnel and the government often looked the other way when these militias planned their attacks or attacked their targets. One scenario a scholar has painted as most likely, is that when collective identities are mobilised, politicised and 'hardened' by conflict entrepreneurs, such events often take place.³⁸

Quite aside from this, floods have also been a recurrent challenge to residents and one of the causes of the spate of displacements in Benue. For example, there were floods in 2012, 2015 and 2017. The flood in 2012 was blamed on the overflowing of the Lagdo lake Reservoir in Cameroon and the last displacement caused by flood was in September 2017. However, the

35 International Crisis Group, 'Herders against...', pp. 13–18; International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's...', p. 8.

36 *Global Rights. A Joint Communique by a Joint Civil Society Organisation*, 'The Crisis in the Benue Valley and other Parts of Nigeria,' 4 May 2018, <http://www.globalrights.org/ngn/news/the-crisis-in-the-benue-valley-and-other-parts-of-nigeria/> (accessed 23 September 2019); Tunde Ajaja, 'Benue has lost N400bn to herdsmen attacks—Ortom,' *Punch Newspaper*, 8 September 2018, <https://punchng.com/benue-has-lost-n400bn-to-herdsmen-attacks-ortom/> (accessed 23 September 2019).

37 Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'Nigeria: Rising Toll of Middle-Belt Violence: Urgently Step Up Investigations: Hold Attackers to Account,' 28 June 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/28/nigeria-rising-toll-middle-belt-violence> (accessed 12 September 2018).

38 Lucy Hovil, *Refugees, Conflict and the Search for Belonging*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 17–42.

most recent displacement, since January 2018, has been caused by the Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers crisis. Although these crises are not unique to the Middle Belt area of Nigeria, or Nigeria alone,³⁹ as a result of the incessant insecurity in the country,⁴⁰ Benue's situation is mostly underreported, politicised and downplayed. A development which has overshadowed the challenges faced by its teeming IDPs.

The challenges facing IDPs in Benue State

Generally, most IDPs usually suffer lack of basic needs, which are often neglected by government and other stakeholders. Some of these basic needs are portable water, food, lack of shelter and even toilets. Even when some of these services exists or are provided, they are usually not enough, hence lead to discrimination and further abuse.⁴¹

Specifically in Benue, about 300,000 persons were believed to have fled their ancestral lands due to the incessant herdsmen-farmer clashes to live in designated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Benue State, North-Central Nigeria in January 2018.⁴² Although, a report stated that about 500,000 displaced local farmers have been created by the crises,⁴³ this included some displaced persons who are squatting in other parts not designated as IDP camps. These numbers were arrived at based on the revelation of the Benue State Emergency management Agency (BSEMA), which indicated that about 175,070 were displaced as at March 2018, together with another 10,940 refugees from Southern Cameroon who were taking refuge in Abande and Imande-Agbatse camps, in Kwande Local Government Area (LGA). The agency revealed that there were 80,450 children, of which 47,353 were males, while 39,909 were females.⁴⁴

However, the issue of managing the IDPs and returning them home remains problematic owing to the fact that most developing countries, including Nigeria, are hardly prepared for such emergency crises. And when preparations are

39 There are evidences in Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa Republic (CAR), Mali, and other West Africa regions. See: Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Past is Prologue: Criminality & Reprisal attacks in Nigeria's Middle Belt,' Washington; Search for Common Ground, 2017, pp. 7, 15.

40 Olasupo O. Thompson, Abiodun S. Afolabi and Shola A. Abdulkabi, 'Beyond the 'capture of 'Camp Zero': Terrorism and Insecurity in a Failing-Weak State,' *Indian Quarterly: A Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 75, No. 3, 2019, p.1, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0974928419860922> (accessed 18 September 2019).

41 Asplet, *Internal Displacement*...., p.17.

42 International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's...', p. i.

43 Peter Duru, 'O Benue, it is 500 dead in 196 days!', *Vanguard Newspaper*, 15 July 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/o-benue-it-is-500-dead-in-196-days/> (accessed 27 July 2019).

44 Duru, 'O Benue, it is 500 dead...'

being made, management of situations and resources are usually controversial, politicised and complex, thereby, complicating the living, health conditions and survival tendencies of the IDPs. Aside from the challenges of surviving in these camps, there are also some attendant challenges such as disease, lack of social amenities, power supply, including portable water, good nutrition, lack of education and sustainable livelihoods, among other things. Some interviews conducted show that the challenges vary across age, sex, status and group, even though, they meet at a lack of adequate social amenities.

Studies elsewhere have identified inadequate amenities, unconducive and inadequate shelter/accommodation, food, clothing, human rights abuses, their general welfare and conditions, including lack of social amenities, such as access to school, portable water, electricity, toilet, sanitation, poor waste management, among others.⁴⁵ To understand the Benue IDP peculiarities, observations and interviews were held. To wit, the Chairman of the Abagena IDPs camp, Philip Utsatse, corroborated some of the challenges facing the IDPs as including lack of adequate accommodation and even fever caused by rainfall, which permeates the rooms due to lack of windows.⁴⁶ Corroboratively, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), observed that the Nigerian IDPs were facing dire living conditions and enormous challenges including inadequate or lack of food, nutrition, water and sanitation, as well as limited health facilities.⁴⁷

Although the UNHCR study was based on the state of IDPs in Borno State, there is no doubt that this is evidenced among the Benue IDPs, since this seems to be a general situation in developing countries. For example, a key informant said, “it is a shame that I cannot go to school because my mates will be in school now and I am here, where we do not have any school. And if a school is provided here, I will miss my friends, as we usually played together.”⁴⁸ Although one could see some makeshift tutorial strands for some children, they were either non-standard schools or incomparable to what most of the pupils had previously enjoyed back home. To be sure, a key informant

45 Olumuyiwa O. Odusanya, ‘Editorial: The Health of Internally Displacement Persons,’ *Nigeria Postgraduate Medical Journal*, Vol. 23, 2016, p. 159; Grace W. Akuto, ‘Challenge of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Nigeria: Implications for Counselling and the Roles of Key Stakeholders,’ *International Journal of Innovative Psychology & Social Development*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2017, pp. 23–24; Stephen Adewale, ‘Internally Displaced Persons and the Challenges of Survival in Abuja,’ *African Security Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2016, pp. 176–192; Ketevan Sulava, ‘At the Crossroads of Identity, Belongings and the Myth of Return: A Case Study of Georgian internally Displaced Persons of 1992-93,’ MA Dissertation, Graduate School Hague, 2010, p. 9.

46 Interview with Philip Utsatse, Chairman Abagena IDP, 12 August 2018.

47 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ‘Nigeria Situation 2017,’ pp. 4, 9. <https://www.unhcr.org/597704b87.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2019).

48 Interview with an anonymous child, 8years, Abagena IDP Camp, 12 August 2018.

said, “though some people volunteered to teach us, I do not like the school as a result of the environmental condition. It is different from how my teachers taught us. I miss my teachers.”⁴⁹

Aside from children, women are also some of the victims of the violence. Most of the women we held personal discussions with revealed that, apart from their living conditions, they are also confronted with loss of livelihood, which had mainly been farming. Some also decried the loss of their bread winners---sons or husbands; and others mentioned sanitation and hygiene, theft, as well as lack of privacy. As one woman put it, “I do not know where my husband is since the attack on my village early this year. We are farmers but now, we cannot go to farm, because the herdsmen have taken over our farms. Here, what they give us a week is only rationed and not compared to what I eat in my house a day.”⁵⁰

Another woman complained of unavailability of cash, which would have helped her family purchase whatever they wanted. In fact, a pregnant woman put it thus, “sometimes I have cravings for a certain food but what they bring is not often what I like. My husband is dead and the unborn child I carry is the only memory of him.”⁵¹

In fact, it was reported that three pregnant women had miscarried as a result of a measles infection, though it was later debunked that the miscarriages had been the result of the disease.⁵² Lately, it was reported that the 20,835 nursing mothers trapped in the entire IDP camps in the seven local governments of the state were calling on stakeholders to come to their aid, particularly in returning them and their children to their ancestral homes.⁵³ Furthermore, the aged and physically challenged as a result of conflict or before the conflict have also been victims of the conflict. Aggregately, these groups are the most vulnerable population.

Generally, the health challenges of the IDPs range from malaria, diarrhea, measles, malnutrition and cholera. Though the first three remain the most widespread. Thus, Owoaje et al (2016) in their studies on the health problems of IDPs in Africa through the lenses of existing literature revealed that the major physical health problems and symptoms were fever/malaria (85%

49 Interview with an anonymous child, 13 years, Abagena IDP Camp, 12 August 2018.

50 Interview with Mary Dimta, widow, 39 years, Abagena Camp 12 August 2018.

51 Interview with Priscila Angar, pregnant woman, Daudu Camp, 16 August 2018.

52 Hembadoon Orsar, ‘We want to return to our Homes-Benue IDPs cry out,’ *Leadership Newspaper*, 29 September 2018, <https://leadership.ng/2018/09/29/we-want-to-return-to-our-homes-benue-idps-cry-out/> (accessed 17 July 2019).

53 Peter Duru, ‘20,835 nursing mothers trapped in Benue IDP camps,’ *Vanguard*, 11 October 2019, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/10/20835-nursing-mothers-trapped-in-benue-idps-camps/> (accessed 11 October 2019).

in children and 48% in adults), malnutrition in children (stunting 52% and wasting 6%), malnutrition in adult males (24%), diarrhea (62% in children and 22% in adults) and acute respiratory infections (45%), and further discovered the prevalence of mental health problems as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (range: 42%–54%) and depression (31%–67%).⁵⁴ In fact, it was reported that while over 30 people were infected with measles at the Abagena IDP camp in early 2018 it claimed the lives of seven children.⁵⁵

The IDPs are faced with other challenges such as sexual violence, child molestations, rape, gender violence, bitterness, fear, enforced terrorism recruitment, including child soldiering, recruitment into suicide bombings, diseases and epidemics, among others. Some scholars working on the sub region state that other challenges include the lack of institutional capacity and adequate resources at the national level; a lack of coordination among stakeholders, which often led to duplication of efforts; insufficient inclusion of IDPs themselves in decision making.⁵⁶ For instance, a woman said, “we thank the government and other donors for their help since I have been in this camp, but this place is not a safe place for me and my children, especially the female ones.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, there has been allegations that some security personnel were involved in raping some female IDPs, especially children.⁵⁸

Aside from the IDPs, some of the neighbouring communities, where the IDPs are camped, also face challenges. Although, they share similar culture and history with the displaced people, most fear that the situation has posed security challenge to their neighbourhoods.⁵⁹ The majority of the neighbours around one of the visited IDP camps emphasised the issue of public safety, health and inadequate resources to serve the community. A key informant said, “I feel for these IDPs, but I am afraid that some of them may come and rob us in the community because a hungry man is an angry man. Also, some of their children may negatively influence our children.”⁶⁰ Thus, some scholars opine

54 Eme T. Owoaje, Obioma C. Uchendu, Tumininu O. Ajayi and Eniola O. Cadmus, ‘A Review of the Health Problems of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa,’ *Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4, October-December 2016, pp. 168–169.

55 Joseph Wantu and Charles Akpeyi, ‘Measles outbreak in IDP kills seven children,’ *The Guardian*, 6 April 2018, <https://guardian.ng/news/measles-outbreak-in-idp-camp-kills-seven-children/> (accessed 12 April 2019).

56 Jessica Wyndham, ‘The challenges of internal displacement in West Africa,’ *Brookings Institutions – University of Bern Project on Displacement*, 19 September 2006, p. 69, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0919westafrica_wyndham_en.pdf (accessed 12 April 2019).

57 Interview with Ms Alice Osah, 28 years, at Abagena Camp, 12 August 2018.

58 ‘Benue Govt Investigate Rape Allegation at IDP Camps’, *Channels Television*, 5 May 2019, <https://www.channelstv.com/2019/05/05/benue-govt-investigates-rape-allegation-at-idp-camps/> (accessed 17 July 2019).

59 Interview with Mark Ntor, around Abagena Camp, 12 August 2018.

60 Interview with anonymous woman around Abagena Camp, 12 August 2018.

that such high levels of housing mobility leads to a deterioration of the social fabric and causes various problems for the residents of the neighbourhood.⁶¹ Little wonder a study of the IDPs in the country's capital city argued that neglect of IDPs has serious implications for the security of the city.⁶²

Such inability to reach a consensus has aggravated the conditions of the IDPs, owing to the fact that the government does not factor such peculiarities into national policy frameworks, and where these are sometimes factored in, they are usually politicised and/or poorly implemented.⁶³

Lord's Song in a strange Land? Government's Intervention and IDPs Response

Since 1999, Nigeria has instituted various domestic frameworks to cater for the welfare of the displaced and to make sure that the places temporarily designated as 'homes' actually become homelike and give the IDPs a sense of belonging. This framework was done through the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in March 1999. The Part II, Section 6, of the Act, stipulates some of the functions of the agency to formulate policies on matters relating to disaster management, co-ordinate and promote research activities relating to disaster management; monitor the state of preparedness of all organisations or agencies which may contribute to disaster management in Nigeria, but not limited to preparing an annual budget for disaster management in Nigeria, among others things.⁶⁴ For effective decentralisation, Part 8 (1) of The Act further stipulates that federating units have similar disaster agency to manage disasters in the various states, known as State Emergency Management Committees.⁶⁵ Although, this is popularly called State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) across the federating states over the years.

Evidently, the plight of the IDPs in 2017 was a result of perennial flooding, which affected about 21 local government areas in the state, displacing about 110,000 families. In responding to the Benue IDP case, the UNHCR donated

61 Mahallede A.D. Kaybıand, Yerinden E. Dışlanma, 'Loss of Social Belonging, Displacement and Social Exclusion in the Neighborhood: Urban Redevelopment in Sarıgöl, Istanbul, Turkey,' *CILT*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2018, p. 171.

62 Adewale, 'Internally Displaced Persons...', pp. 183–192.

63 In Nigeria, while the government of Benue State pointed accusing fingers at the Federal Government of not preventing the Benue Massacre, allegedly caused by the Fulani-Herdsmen, the Federal Government and the All Progressives Congress (APC) leadership fired back that such crisis were caused by its oppositions, and even the Governor, Samuel Ortom after he decamped to destabilise the polity.

64 Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), *National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Establishment Decree etc., 1999*, Lagos: FMG, 1999, pp. 542–543.

65 Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), *National Emergency...*, p. 545.

a total of 22,220 relief materials worth over N18 million to the victims of flood in Benue State. The materials included, 2,700 blankets, 5,400 sanitary pads, 1,080 solar lanterns, 2,700 inner wears, 5,400 antiseptic bottles, 5,400 detergent sachets and 540 mattresses in September 2017.⁶⁶ The wife of the President, Aisha Buhari was not left out, among those who donated relief materials to the IDPs camped at the International Market Makurdi. But after the violence between late 2017 and early 2018, owing to the farmers-herders crisis, which resulted in another set of IDPs, other interventions became inevitable.

Nigeria's House of Representatives and other stakeholders, including the Benue state government, and the Federal Government through the NEMA also responded to the Benue IDP cases after a deadly attack which occurred on New Year's eve in Guma and Logo local government areas of the state and other neighbouring communities in Nasarawa state. Subsequently, Director General of NEMA Engineer Mustapha Maihaja, represented by the Director Relief and Rehabilitation of the Agency, Kayode Fagbemi, led staff from the North-Central zonal office in providing succour to the people affected by the attacks in the state on 15 January 2018.⁶⁷ Consequently, the FG launched operation *Ayem Akpatuma*, or 'cat race', to end these incessant attacks, which was supposed to run from 15 February to 31 March, 2018 in Benue as well as, Taraba, Kogi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Niger States. Meanwhile, the Benue state's SEMA, and the government, despite the challenges posed by paucity of funds, also responded with distributions and management of donations and relief materials for the IDPs.

Year	Total Personnel	Overhead	Total Recurrent	Total Cost	Total Allocation
2017	727,769,699	152,230,385	850,000,084	506,120,212	1,386,120,296
2018	836,552,978	152,230,385	988,783,363	532,120,212	1,520,903,575
2019	847,564,926	152,230,385	999,795,311	444,837,821	1,444,633,132

Table 2. Appropriated Budget for NEMA, 2017–2019⁶⁸

66 Joseph Wantu, 'UNHCR donates to Benue IDPs,' *Guardian Newspaper*, 23 September 2017 <https://guardian.ng/news/unhcr-donates-to-benue-idps/> (accessed 23 September 2019).

67 'NEMA Responds to Humanitarian Situation in Benue State,' *NEMA*, 15 January 2018, <http://nema.gov.ng/nema-responds-to-humanitarian-situation-in-benue-state/> (accessed 25 September 2018).

68 Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), *Appropriation Bill. 2017 FGN Budget Proposal*, Abuja: Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2017, pp.12–13; Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), *Appropriation Bill. 2018 FGN Budget Proposal*, Abuja: Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2018, pp.19–20; Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), *Appropriation Bill. 2019 FGN Budget Proposal*, Abuja: Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2019, pp. 1, 12.

The above shows that the total allocation increased between 2017 and 2018, while there was a little reduction in 2019. Some Federal Government agencies, such as the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Nigeria Customs Services, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), also donated relief materials to the IDPs. The presidency also responded by not only donating gifts, but by also promising to return the IDPs to their ancestral land, 'home'. This was put succinctly thus:

“We want to ensure that all villages that have been destroyed and attacked are secured. We want to ensure that IDPs return to their homes but, before then, places that were destroyed are rebuilt. Also, we must restore the farms and farmlands so that farmers can go back to work... To ensure that all these projects are funded, the president and the full Security Council has approved N10 billion already....”⁶⁹

The statement is credited to the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, during a two-day visit to one of the IDPs camps in Benue State on 15 May 2018. Again, the Nigeria Army commenced another full scale operation, known as, 'Operation Whirl Stroke', to restore peace in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Zamfara states. It was believed that the operation would end the incessant attacks, banditry, and restore peace to the areas, so that the people could go about their lawful duties without fear of molestation.⁷⁰ This shows that aside from monetary intervention, military action was also triggered by the FG, to safely return the IDPs home.

State and Individual Level interventions

Additionally, the governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike, during his visit to the state over the killing of 73 people during one of the attacks on some of the communities, also donated N200million⁷¹ to the government for the care of the IDPs in February 2018. Other donor stakeholders included, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), private individuals, anonymous contributors, religious leaders, student bodies, philanthropists, business moguls, artists, among others.

During the Children's Day Celebration on 27 May, 2018, the former Senate President, Dr Abubakar Bukola Saraki, visited one of the camps. His visit was

69 Rose Ejembi, 'Insurgency, Killings: FG approves 10billion for rebuilding in Benue and others,' *Sun Newspaper*, 16 May 2018, <http://sunnewsonline.com/insurgency-killings-fg-approves-n10bn-for-rebuilding-in-benue-others/> (accessed 27 September 2018).

70 John Charles, 'Military starts full-scale operation in Benue, three others,' *Punch*, 19 May 2018, <https://punchng.com/military-starts-full-scale-operation-in-benue-three-others/> (accessed 23 September 2019).

71 \$1=N305/306 official exchange rate.

not only to donate relief materials to some of the children in the camp, but he also took out time to spend the day with them. Subsequently, he donated N8 million for the provision of two classroom blocks of four classes each for the 40,000 person capacity IDPs camp at Abagena in September 2018. Most of the IDPs were happy, not only due to finding a place they could temporarily call 'home', but because they were alive.⁷² Despite this level of intervention from stakeholders, to ensure that the IDPs were well taken care of and make the newly found camps homely, how have the IDPs themselves felt?

Responses of IDPs

Regrettably, most of the IDPs stated that, if not for the insecurity in their ancestral homes, they would have preferred returning.⁷³ This shows that, even as they appreciated the various interventions from donors and other stakeholders, they still did not have the sense of belonging in their new found 'homes'. Little wonder that some scholars found that socially inhibited individuals experience psychological and social problems, and equated belonging as a useful concept for social and psychological functioning.⁷⁴ However, when some of the respondents were asked the reasons for such nostalgia, the majority revealed that they needed a livelihood, where they could sell, buy, hold on to physical cash, and live normal lives.⁷⁵

The most prominent reason given was that there was no place like home.⁷⁶ This undoubtedly shows the importance of place attachment and identity, despite the fact that the areas where they were was within their cultural area. Corroboratively, a father of six, Hyacinth Orji, 57 years old, stated that, "our prayer to God and the government is for the crisis to end to enable us to go back home, and adequate security should be provided too for our safe return."⁷⁷ In fact, a woman captured her experience thus:

"How can we be happy here when herdsmen are invading our lands and occupying our territories, farms and feeding our yams and foodstuff to their cows? This place can never be like home, because we cannot

⁷² Interviews with most of the IDPs interviewed in Abagena Camp 12 August 2018.

⁷³ Some IDP were even withdrawn or aggressive to be interviewed. One was caught murmuring that despite many interviews that had been granted, their status had remained the same.

⁷⁴ Bonnie M. Hagerty, Reg A Williams, James C. Coyne and Margaret R. Early, 'Sense of Belonging and Indicators of Social and Psychological Functioning,' *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1996, pp. 235–244.

⁷⁵ Interview with some of the IDPs in Abagena and Daudu Camps, 12, 16 August 2018.

⁷⁶ Interviews with several IDPs in both Abagena and Daudu Camps, 12, 16 August 2018.

⁷⁷ Cephas Iorhemen, 'Benue: 51 IDPs dies in six months–Commandant,' *New Telegraph*, 5 July 2018, <https://www.newtelegraphng.com/2018/07/benue-51-idps-died-in-six-months-commandant/> (accessed 13 July 2019).

do as we like. We cannot eat, dress and live the way we like. We have become Israelites in our own land. It is like asking us to sing the Lord's song here, despite the fact that it is within Benue. It can never be like my home."⁷⁸

Ultimately, the IDPs are faced with questions of when to return home; if their once called 'home' could ever remain how it used to be and how a camp far away from home could be called home for this long.

Concluding Remarks

The study examined the meaning and nature of Internally Displaced Persons; the causes for their emergence and challenges facing them as well as government intervention and IDP responses in Benue State, Nigeria. The study found out that the displacements in Benue were caused by flooding and resource conflict, mainly between herders and farmers, especially after the state's anti-grazing law in 2017. It further revealed that those most affected were the vulnerable populations, which include women, children, pregnant women, the sick, the aged, the physically challenged among others. More so, the Benue IDPs, like in other parts of the world, faced similar challenges ranging from lack of food, shelter/accommodation, health, sanitation, and malnutrition etc. Among some of their health challenges, malaria, diarrhea, and measles were the prevalent.

Poignantly, some of the IDPs have lost their lives due to their living conditions, either as a result of illnesses contracted before or after getting to the camps. Perhaps as a result of lack of planning, poor and inadequate health and medical care, which in itself is a problem of Nigeria and African continent as a whole. However, to curb these challenges the government and other stakeholders have donated both cash and kind to ameliorate the living conditions of the IDPs and also make them feel at 'home'. It has annually increased the annual budget of the NEMA, except for the 2019 budget. Furthermore, the Federal Government has also reiterated plans to return the IDPs safely home, so that they can live their normal lives. To be sure, the federal government launched several military operations, and also promised financial aid, not only to Benue IDPs but to other IDPs across the country. Despite these promises and interventions, the IDPs are still confronted with numerous challenges, especially on health-related issues, and wanting to return to their ancestral lands. Unfortunately, they still allege that the dreaded herdsmen militias still occupy their ancestral lands and that the militias are still backed by government forces.

78 Interview with Mrs Esther Atama in Abagena Camp, 12 August 2018.

The findings of the study further show that no matter the interventions, home, belonging and place identity play germane roles in determining the level of nostalgia. It is hoped that since the root causes of IDPs are better known, especially in the Benue case, this can be holistically addressed, by preventive measures. Such preventive steps, known as the Pinheiro principle, could be applicable to not only resolve the present crisis of IDPs in Benue, but for future cases, across the globe. Furthermore, governments must address the cases of flooding, or natural disasters through early warning or monitoring mechanisms, planning and implementation of the climate change protocol so as to stem the desertification of the Sahara.

On the Farmers-Herders crisis, the government's political will must be animated. This can start when justice is done; by making sure culprits and accomplices, including security agencies and civilians culpable in the conflict, are prosecuted. A policy of social inclusion and good governance should also be instituted, where security of lives, property and rule of law are guaranteed as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN).

Moreover, a systemic programme by which the herders are educated on best international practices of nomadism should be introduced, borders should be well managed to check illegal inflows of immigrants and weapons. Moreover, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) protocol on movement of people across the sub-region should be addressed, so as to stop the influx of foreign militias and mercenaries alleged to be some of the international perpetrators of the conflict.