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Wellbeing of Persons Displaced by Communal Clashes in Ebonyi State, South East, Nigeria and Implications for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

In Nigeria, apart from the Boko Haram mayhem, internal displacement resulting from communal clashes has become a thorn in the development agenda of the nation and other Sub-Saharan African countries. This paper examined the wellbeing of persons displaced by communal clashes in Ebonyi State, Southeast, Nigeria and its implications for sustainable development. Realistic Conflict Theory was adopted as the theoretical orientation. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed while questionnaire and in-depth interview formed the major instruments for data collection.120 respondents were chosen from three autonomous communities (Ezillo, Ndiagu-Alike and Abaomege) and administered with questionnaire on three wellbeing indices (health, economic and psycho-social) in addition to six participants purposively selected for in-depth interview (IDI). Respondents were chosen from communities that had once experienced communal clashes and displacement but now settled in their ancestral homes as there are no permanent IDP camps in the state. Data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using simple descriptive statistics while that of in-depth interview were transcribed and thematically done. Study findings revealed that displaced persons during communal clashes in the state were exposed to some health hazards as widespread of diseases (74.2%), inaccessibility to medical services(67.5%), malnutrition(55%), anxiety/depression, trauma (90.8%) and abridgement of social network(48.3%). The overall implication is that many of the displaced victims of communal clashes see their plight as a form of life sentence not prioritized in the nation's policy debates and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).The study therefore recommended the urgent need for the government to establish permanent IDP camps in all the states rather than restricting it to victims of Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, victims should be given the necessary assistance as they are reintegrated into the society.

Keywords: Displacement, Internal displaced persons, Communal clash,Wellbeing, Sustainable Development

Introduction

There appears to be a growing number of internally displaced persons occasioned by communal clashes within different states of the federation. This is in addition to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the herdsmen attack, political and religious conflict, banditry and other natural disasters such as flood, hurricane and oil spillage. According to Mohammed (2017), most people displaced by communal clashes do flee to neighbouring communities which make the situation unnoticeable as there are no formal camps established in most states by the government to take care of this group of people. The author also noted that more attention was given to displaced victims of Boko Haram Insurgency and that of Fulani Herdsmen which seems to have dominated the entire landscape and even across national boundaries.

It therefore seems that Nigeria's present development effort is being hampered by many of these unresolved clashes among different communities. Okafor (2012) reported that on 31st December,2011,more than 50 people died with many displaced as a result of hostility between

Ezza and Ezillo people of Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. More so, in September 2019 more than 2,000 people excluding children were dis placed in a crisis that ensued between Azadeene village and Ukwuagba, Ngbo both in Ohaukwu local government council of the same state while a considerable number of people from Ekpomaka, Alike and Inyimagu communities who were displaced in the same scenario received succor from the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and internal displaced persons (Agwu, 2019; Okutu, 2019). Apart from the above mentioned cases, there have been reports of other communal clashes in Ebonyi State such as Ezza-Effium clashes in Ohaukwu local government area,theAbaomega-Ishinkwo conflict in Onicha local government area,clashes between Ndiagu Alike and Enyibichiri communities in Ikwo and Abakaliki local government areas, the conflict between Amagu community in Ikwo local government area and Adadama community of Cross River state and others.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre,IDMC(2019) noted that as at April,2020,863 persons were displaced as a result of clashes between the Jukun of Taraba state and Tiv communities of Benue state.The Centre also noted that in 2019,out of 2.2 million people displaced in Nigeria,248,000 were victims of communal clashes. Babayeju (2015) observed that in most times when cases of communal crisis occur women and children are the most hit because of their vulnerable nature. Most of the victims tend to pitch their tent in the schools, churches and other public buildings while some sleep in batchers, or abandoned vehicles and on top of trees.

In Nigeria however, the ordeals of the Internally displaced persons generally are not just about the pains of exodus from their ancestral homes to nowhere in particular or how they sleep on trees like wild animals and long trek into the bush to find solace in neighbouring towns but on the insensitivity of the government to their plights (Nii-Veror,2014). In other words,it is the responsibility of the government to provide succor to victims with the establishment of rehabilitation camps with all the necessities of life, like water, blankets, food stuff and other relief materials. Mohammed (2017) states that in addition to lack of water, electricity, primary health and education services, income earning opportunities are also very difficult as most of the IDPs are rural farmers with no access to land or cash nor do they possess alternative skills to earn a decent living. As a result, most victims of Internal displacement depend on donations by well spirited individuals or philanthropists, Non-Governmental organizations, civil society groups, and religious organizations for survival (Babayeju,2015).

Although the little efforts of the government is being coordinated by the National Emergency Management Agency(NEMA),the Federal Ministry of Gender Affairs and Social Development do not have a unit or desk office in-charge of IDPs which implies that the ministry do not have any intervention programme for this group of Nigerians. This is against the provisions of the National Policy on IDPs which in ' Section 2 Article 4: 2 'stipulates that displaced persons in Nigeria where ever found will be treated with dignity, and be seen as human beings and not just vulnerable hopeless victims of circumstance requiring assistance (FGN,2013). However, it appears that the establishment of the new federal ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management may take further step as the strategies for national development would depend on its strength for social integration and realization of more prosperous and meaningful lives for all the citizens.

Many studies on Internal displacement in Nigeria seems to have centred on Boko Haram Insurgency and Fulani Herdsmen attack especially in the Northern parts of the country where the government had opportunities of building some permanent IDP camps with little or no consideration of those displaced by communal

crisis(Babayeju,2015,Adewale,2016; Mohammed, 2017; Onifade &Osinowo, 2019). In other words, no study had attempted to examine the wellbeing of persons displaced by communal clashes and its implications for sustainable development with special reference to Ebonyi State, Nigeria, It is against this background that the study was undertaken to fill this knowledge gap.

In pursuing the study objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

(I) What is the prevalent rate of people displaced by communal clashes in Ebonyi State?

(ii) To what extent does internal displacement by communal clashes affect the health wellbeing, economic and psycho-social state of victims?

(iii) Does Internal displacement resulting from communal clashes in Nigeria have any effect on sustainable development?

Conceptual Frame Work

Wellbeing: Wellbeing seems to be a multifaceted concept. However, in its broadest sense, it denotes the whole universe of human life, including the physical, mental and social aspects which all form the so called 'good life' (WHO, 2002).It is a measure of individual's health, financial and socio-psychological situations considered desirable, appropriate or satisfactory. According to Seitsamo (2007), the concept of wellbeing could be approached from at least two points of view; the basic human need approach (i.e. the fulfillment of physiological, social and psychical needs) and the resources approach (i.e. individual's capacities and abilities).

Studies have shown that persons displaced as a result of communal clashes in Nigeria aspires to live fulfilling lives as evaluated by them and by others around them(Lindgren,2013, Amadasun,2019). In other words, it tries to assess the feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the displaced individuals over their health, financial resources or living standards, experience of alienation, happiness or unhappiness under the situation. It therefore becomes necessary that adequate social services be provided to attain satisfying standards of life; health, financial, personal and emotional/social relationship which permit them to develop their full capacities and promote their wellbeing in harmony with the needs of their families, and the community (Saharan,2014).

Getanda, Papadopoulos and Evans (2015) noted that internal displacement is bedeviled with such harsh realities of physical, financial, emotional and social trauma in the lives of victims. According to them, being displaced implies that the individual involuntarily leaves his or her ancestral home and get separated along the way to another community or state.

Displaced Persons: This simply refers to individuals or group of individuals that have been forced to flee their homes, communities or place of residence as a result of war, communal clashes or violence, armed conflict, natural or manmade disasters. It is an involuntary movement of people due to conflict, natural hazards or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine or those that resulted from development projects.

According to the African Union Convention for protection and assistance of Internally displaced persons in Africa (Kampala Convention,2009). Internally displaced persons are persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence,in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situation of generalized violence, violation of human rights or natural and human made disasters, and who have not crossed an Internationally recognized state border. Being displaced therefore means that the victim has to leave their families behind or get separated along the way (Amadasun, 2019).

Babayeju (2015) observed that Nigeria has continued to record the highest population of displaced persons in Africa especially during the

Boko Haram insurgency and various inter-communal conflicts. According to the author, the IDPs situation in Nigeria has become embarrassingly alarming as various levels of governments seem not to take the challenges seriously. Although, the efforts of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) have been highly encouraging in the provisions of temporary shelters to the displaced individuals in Nigeria, most victims of displacement are at the mercy of NGOs, the church, civil society groups and philanthropists for their survival.

The National policy on IDPs in Nigeria also recognized that during violent conflicts or communal clashes, most buildings and properties are destroyed or burnt down thereby forcing people to flee to neighbouring communities that are safe, usually taking refuge in temporary shelters such as schools, churches, police stations, military barracks and other public buildings (FGN,2013).This may result to lack of access to the basic necessities of life; food, water and shelter in addition to other forms of exploitations, subjection to human right abuse and lack of protection. Babayeju (2015) observed that among the displaced persons on communal clashes, women and children are the most vulnerable as the male adults prefer to keep vigil in their villages over their belongings.

Communal Clashes/Conflicts: Communal clashes or conflicts are seen as negative forces or disruption of the normal functioning of the social system. This implies that in any social system or society, crisis may arise from differences in perception, limited resources, role conflicts, inequitable treatment, violation of territorial boundary and others (Goldthorpe, 1985; Mulin,1996). According to the author, the fact of scarcity in itself is enough to ensure conflict, and people in any group try by one means or another to increase their shares of scarce resources,if necessary at the expense of others.

Communal clashes or conflicts have remained a thorn and a visible reoccurring problem ravaging the socio-political landscape of Nigeria and Africa generally characterized by differences in culture, language and ethnic nationalities (Oji, Eme &Nwoba,2014). It refers to the actions of one party directed at territory, rights, interests, or privileges of another party ,because of differences over economic issues, power or authority, cultural values and beliefs (Robinson,1998). Ukaegbu and Agunwamba (1995) argued that any social system be it a community, village, association, work-organisation or larger societies as functionally made up of dominant and subordinate groups both of which are in constant dialectical relationships over scarce resources. Communal clashes therefore refer to the fact that the parties want to gain control over some disputed and perceived indivisible resources, such as piece of land or local political power (Brosche, 2015). The groups are organized along a shared communal identity.

Communal clashes poses a severe threat to human society in general killing thousands of people each year and have often become a trigger of civil war (Sunberg, Eck & Kreutz,2012). Most of the communal clashes in Ebonyi State seem to arise from land disputes especially being an area where most people depend on subsistence farming for a living. The World Bank in its 2014 world development reports on local violence in developing countries and humanitarian agencies working in places like Kenya, Southern Sudan, and Nigeria emphasized that communal conflict has been a key obstacle to human society and societal development (Brosche, 2015). Adewale (2016) also observed that communal clashes or conflicts in Nigeria if not resolved, are bound to disrupt the basic life-support systems, contribute to the worsening of already fragmented security architecture and perpetuate under development and indebtedness. One of the major targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to ensure that both the government and other development actors do not relent in ensuring that the needs of people caught up in complex and protracted crisis are taken care of (Rahmaty &

Debarre, 2019).

Theoretical Underpinning

The study was anchored on the Realistic Conflict theory developed by Donald Campell in the middle of 20th centuary and espoused by others such as Mazufer Sherif in 1950s in Oklahome (Stuart, 2020). The theory states that conflict arises between different groups of people that have differing goals and are competing over limited resources. In other words, when two groups are competing over limited resources (either from real or perceived scarcity) prejudicial feelings and negative stereotypes can develop towards the other groups. However, such negative attitudes on both sides could reduce if both groups have superordinate or mutually beneficial goals or other ways to participate and actualize the goals.

In Ebonyi State, most cases of communal clashes emanate from land disputes and claims for control of some economic resources as the people of the state are predominantly farmers. In some instances, communal clashes are facilitated by some power merchants or politicians. The displacement of people or loss of lives and properties that results from the competition poses a threat to the overall wellbeing of victims. According to Mohammed (2017),communal clashes or conflicts expose people to unimaginable atrocities and traumas manifesting in different forms.

Methodology

This is a cross-sectional study of people that have experienced internal displacement due to communal clashes in Ezillo/Ezza in Ishielu Local Government Area, Ndiagu-Alike, Ikwo/Enyiibichiri, Ekpomaka-Alike, Ikwo/Inyimagu, Ukwuagba-Ngbo/Efium, Ishinkwo/Abaomege communities in Onicha Local Government Council. The people are currently residing in their ancestral homes as there are no permanent IDP camps in Ebonyi State. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. In other words, the thirteen Local Government Councils that make up the State were stratified into three which also corresponds with the three Senatorial Districts of the state (Ebonyi north, Ebonyi central & Ebonyi south) and one Local Government Council chosen from each stratum (Ishielu, Ikwo&Onicha). Furthermore, from the clusters of communities that had experienced communal clashes in these Council Areas in the past, three autonomous communities (Ezillo, Ndiagu-Alike &Abaomege) were chosen.

Finally, structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from 129 respondents randomly chosen through balloting (i.e. 43 respondents for each of the three communities) and In-depth Interview carried out with 6 community leaders (i.e. 2 for each of the communities) who were not part of the questionnaire. Respondents in both the questionnaire and Interview Guide were adult males and females of 20 years and above. Equally, respondents in both cases were assured of the ethical concerns of confidentiality by the researchers. Data collected were finally coded and analysed using simple descriptive statistics such as percentages, tables and frequency with 120 questionnaires that were retrieved and properly filled.

Findings and Discussion

The major findings of the study are presented below.

Table 1: Socio-demographic distribution of respondents (n=120).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender		
Male	48	40
Female	72	60
Age (in yrs)		
Below 20	-	-
21-30	25	20.8
31-40	52	43.3
41-50	25	20.8
51+	18	15.1
Marital Status		
Never married	40	33.3
Currently married	73	60.8
Formerly married	7	5.9
Educational Status		
No formal education	8	6.7
Primary	23	19.2
Secondary	61	50.8
Tertiary	28	23.3
Religious Affiliation		
Christian	96	80
Muslim	-	-
Traditional	24	20
Occupational Status		
Farming	55	45.8
Trading/Business	26	21.7
Civil servant	12	10
Artisan	15	12.5
Applicant	4	3.3
Student	8	6.7

Table 1 above shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.Majority (60%) of the respondents were females. The age of respondents ranges from 21 years and above as they have gotten some experiences to share on the issue of displacement during communal crisis. A greater proportion(43.3%) of respondents are within the ages of 31-40 years while over 60% were married.In terms of respondents' educational attainment, majority(50.8%) have secondary educational qualification, while a small proportion(6.7%) never had any formal education. Similarly,80% of respondents belong to the Christian religious faith with none being a Muslim and 20% of African Traditional Religion(ATR). Finally, respondents' occupational status show that 45.8% are farmers which in the context of this study may be the major reasons for communal clashes in the study area.

Table 2: Respondents view on whether there is high rate of Internal displacement resulting from communal Clashes in Ebonyi State (n=120).

Variables	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. There is high rate of internal displacement resulting from communal clashes?	97(80.8%)	13(19.2%)	0
b . Land or boundary issues are the main cause of the clashes/displacement.	83(69%)	31(25.8%)	6(5.2%)

Table 2 as displayed above depicts respondents view on whether there is high rate of internally displaced persons resulting from communal clashes in Ebonyi State. Results emanating from table 2 reveal that a high proportion (80.8%) of respondents admitted having a high prevalent rate of persons displaced by communal clashes at certain point in time in the state while 19.2% spoke otherwise. Rahmaty and Debarre (2019) emphasized that although there is no accurate figure of people displaced as a result of communal clashes and other forms of displacement, the figure continues to increase with the global increase in humanitarian crisis. It was also revealed on this note by majority (69%) of respondents that land or boundary issues have been the bane behind most of these clashes and displacement. This finding aligns with the views of Otite and Albert (1999) that most communal clashes in Africa borders on economic issues in which land constitute about 90%. Similarly, one of the IDI participants who toed the same view added that political motives could still come into play as causal factors.

Table 3: Respondents view on the health challenges of Internally displaced Persons(n=120)

	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. overcrowding/increased spread of diseases	89(74.2%)	26(21.7%)	5(4.1%)
b. higher risk of sexual violence	70(58.3%)	42(35%)	8(6.7%)
c. lack of access to medical services	81(67.5%)	35(29.2%)	4(3.3%)
d. malnutrition among children/the aged	66(55%)	49(40.9%)	5(4.1%)

Table 3 above on the other hand shows the health challenges encountered by victims of internal displacement in Ebonyi State. In other words,74.2% and 58.3% of respondents revealed increased spread of diseases and higher risk of sexual harassment especially on part of girls and women.Equally,67.5% and 55% of respondents reported lack of access to medical services and malnutrition among children and the aged. The finding confirms one of the reports of Human Right Watch (2016) that displacement poses a harmful effect on physical and mental health of the individuals as over 70% of women and girls displaced in Africa are exposed to sexual violence and other health challenges.

Table 4: Respondents view on the economic challenges of Internally Displaced Persons (n= 120)

	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Food shortage/deprivation of basic goods/services	72(60%)	33(27.5%)	15(12.5%)
b. Loss of finance/means of livelihood	03(85.8%)	12(10.1%)	5(4.1%)
c. High level of unemployment	62(51.7%)	46(38.3%)	12(10%)
d. Over exploitation of natural resources	66(55%)	51(42.5%)	3(2.5%)

Table 4 above equally shows the economic challenges faced by internally displaced persons in the state. As indicated on the table,60% and 85.8% respectively revealed acute shortage and deprivation of basic goods and services, and loss of finance/means of livelihood.51.7% and 55% of the respondents also reported high level of unemployment and over exploitation of natural resources to make a living. This finding is in tandem with the reports of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2018) that the drop in income or other economic indices of wellbeing due to communal clashes could also jeopardize the ability of individuals to meet their most basic health, housing and education needs which ultimately impact negatively in the realization of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, one of the IDI participants who supported the above finding stated that displaced persons in the period of communal clashes could only wake up to find themselves in the situation of poverty and hopelessness.

Table 5: Respondents view on the psycho-social state of internally displaced persons (n=120)

	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Anxiety and depression/trauma	109(90.8%)	10(8.3%)	1(0.9%)
b. Mental illness/instability	70(58.3%)	43(35.8%)	7(5.9%)
c. Separate individual social network at home	82(68.3%)	30(25%)	8(6.7%)
d. Interrupt children's education	58(48.3%)	41(34.2%)	21(17.5%)
e. Heighten sense of insecurity	63(52.5%)	39(32.5%)	18(15%)

Table 5 above also tried to ascertain the Respondent's view on the emotional and psycho-social wellbeing of victims, majority (90.8%) of respondents reported anxiety/depression and trauma especially seeing people being slaughtered like animals during such crisis. 58.3% of respondents reported that mental illness/instability could result from communal clashes while 63.7% were of the view that it hampers the social networks of the individual especially at home. Equally, 48.3% argued that displacement during communal crisis could interrupt children's educational programme while 52.5% reported the heightening of sense of insecurity.

Many of the study findings therefore are in tandem with the submissions of Olanrewaju, Omotoso and Olanrewaju (2019) that internal displaced persons are exposed to illness, injury, emotional distress, dependency and loss of capacity for economic independence and loss of livelihood. A male IDI participant who subscribed to the above findings put it this way:

> T*he greatest plight of IDPs is the loss one's home. It sounds like ordinary story but if you have ever experienced such, you will never forget it throughout your entire life. It is just like during the periods of Nigeria-Biafra war; no food, no medical facilities, mothers separating from their children and people dying like fowls, yet no positive step from anywhere to rescue people. In fact, anyone who survived was by the grace of God. This is exactly what happened in Ebonyi State in all the communal clashes.*

Implications of Findings to Sustainable Development

Nowadays, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Internally displaced persons to have sustainable livelihood. This stems from their inability to access the basic facilities and necessities of life. According to Fineman (2008),displaced persons are marginalized, disadvantaged and disenfranchised from the mainstream society. This is contrary to the tenets of the sustainable development goals which states that every person irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, colour, socio-economic background, culture must have access to their most basic needs; food, clean water, shelter amongst others (UN,2019). In other words, one of the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals is to reduce the risks and vulnerability of people caught up in complex and protracted crisis. In most cases, victims of displacement due to communal clashes tend to see their plight or situation as a form of life sentence which continues throughout one's existence.

When displaced persons are into the political and economic mainstream of the society, they stand a greater chance of promoting a fair society especially now that the world is gradually moving closer to becoming a global community. In other words, it will help to release the world from perpetual under development and indebtedness (Adewale,2016). Equally, considering the wellbeing of displaced persons and addressing the root causes of conflict especially in Nigeria is an essential dimension and solution to peace building and development in the 21st century. Many of the public policies in Nigeria find it difficult to acknowledge the problems of people displaced by communal clashes rather attention is focused on those of Boko Haram, herds men, banditry, flood and other natural disasters. AsKalin (2008) noted, resolving internal disputes is inextricably linked to achieving lasting peace and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All that we have attempted to show in this study is that displacement of persons as a result of communal clashes in Nigeria has remained a dangerous thorn on the overall wellbeing of victims. Findings of the study have revealed that displaced persons of communal conflicts in Ebonyi State are exposed to widespread of diseases/illnesses, lack of access to medical services and justice, squatting in congested shelters, severed expression/anxiety, sexual harassment, break down in social networks, malnutrition, poverty and others.

In order to overcome these challenges, the study made some recommendations which include the need for the government at both federal and state to establish permanent IDP camps for displaced victims of communal clashes with all the necessary facilities. One of the strategies for sustainable development would depend on the strength of a nation to promote social integration and wellbeing of her citizenry. Moreover, there is the need to adhere to the Humanitarian Principles of ECOWAS Community on Displaced Persons which requires the treatment of displaced individuals with dignity where ever they are found

and not just as vulnerable or hopeless individuals of circumstances (FGN,2013). Again, well spirited individuals or philanthropists and Non-Governmental Organisations should equally give a helping hand to complement government efforts. All these will serve as practical steps or real anchor for sustainable development.

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