

International Organizations and Management of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Benue State

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Abstract

This paper examines the roles that international organizations play in the management of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Benue State. Benue State has been faced with problems of flood, communal conflict and herders/farmers conflict, a development which has led to lost of lives and properties and has forced many persons to flee their ancestral homes to IDPs camps scattered across the state. This situation has resulted in humanitarian emergency in the state. This paper therefore, assesses the various humanitarian interventions in the IDPs camps to ascertain the conditions of the IDPs and the effectiveness of the interventions by the international organizations. The study made use of secondary sources of data. Findings of the study revealed that international organizations such as; United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the Red Cross, United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, International Organization for Migration and United State Agency for International Development have over the years intervened at various intervals with different strategies to provide for the needs of the IDPs in the state using intervention strategies like food, water, access to protection and security, educational services; and health services. Despite the intervention by international organizations, the living conditions of the IDPs are still deplorable and vulnerable. The study recommended that, international organizations should provide more services and materials to the IDPs and make sure that the materials provided by them are not diverted by government officials.

Keywords: International Organizations, Management, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Camps, Conflict

Introduction

One of the contemporary challenges facing the Nigerian state is how to alleviate the suffering of the Internally Displaced Persons

(IDPs) in the country. Since the restoration of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, the Nigerian state is faced with challenges such as natural disasters and insecurity across the country, this development has resulted to internal displacements of 18, 134, 345 of people (NEMA, 2023). National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA, 2023) stated that, from July 2012 to May 2023, a total of 2,184, 254 million residents were displaced by flood, Boko Haram insurgency, communal crisis, ethno-religious conflicts, herders/farmers conflict and banditry in Nigeria.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is the body tasked with managing IDPs in Nigeria while the various states government have established State Emergency Management Agencies to manage IDPs in their respective states. The Nigerian government, through the National Emergency Management Agency and other state-created organizations, are responsible for caring for the needs of internally displaced people living in camps provided by government by giving them access to food, shelter, healthcare, and education, among other things (Ejiofor and Oni, 2017; Oluwole and Eme, 2019). Occasionally, International Organizations and Non Governmental Organizations NGOs step in to help the government meet the needs of the internally displaced people (Akinboye and Oloruntoba, 2017).

Benue State has been one among the states that have been faced with the problem of managing IDPs in the country; many people in recent times have been displaced in the state as a result of herders and farmers' conflict, communal conflict and flood. Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA, 2023) gave the number of those displaced to stand at over 427,814 people. The most affected persons are vulnerable groups such as children, the aged and women who are exposed to severe socio-economic challenges. Even though the Benue State government through its State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) has made efforts in addressing the plights of IDPs by providing camps, there are still challenges of overcrowding, poor sanitation, rape, joblessness,

insecurity in the IDPs camps and even deaths. This situation has in some occasions forced the IDPs to even flee the camps for their safety, an action that worsens their predicaments.

In order to complement the efforts of the state government in addressing the challenges of IDPs in Benue State, various International Organizations such as; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Red Cross, United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United State Agency for International Development (USAID) have over the years intervened at various intervals with different strategies to provide for the needs of the IDPs in the state using intervention strategies like food, water, access to protection and security, educational services; and health services (SEMA, 2023).

IDPs in the state have continued to experience disproportionate amounts of problems like starvation, illness, insecurity in the camps, a lack of access to education, idleness, and even mortality despite government and international organizations intervention to ease their difficulties. Thus the government, international organizations and NGOs has been catering for the needs of the IDPs, the extent to which international organizations have assisted in providing for the needs of IDPs in the various camps in the state is unknown; this is the reason that has informed this study.

It is against this background that this paper seeks to interrogate assesses the various humanitarian interventions in the IDPs camps to ascertain the conditions of the IDPs and the effectiveness of the interventions by the international organizations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Akinboye and Ottoh (2005) opine that an international organization is composed of sovereign independent states,

voluntarily joining in a common pursuit of certain goals. Palmer and Perkins (1969) assert that an international organization is any cooperative structure created among governments usually by a basic agreement, to fulfill some mutually advantageous functions implemented through periodic meetings and staff activities.

An international organization, according to Plano and Olton (1988), is a formal structure that transcends national boundaries that permits for the formation of an institutional mechanism to facilitate cooperation among members in security, economic, social, or related domains. In a nutshell, it is seen as a formal entity created by sovereign states with a strong structure and an aim to pursue their members' common interests. This suggests that an international organization might be viewed as an avenue for the coordination and dissemination of the foreign policy of its sovereign member nations in the interest of promoting global peace and security.

From the above, an international organization, also known as an intergovernmental organization or an international institution, is a stable body of standards and guidelines intended to guide the conduct of states and other participants in the international system. Organizations, like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and NATO, may be created through a treaty or be a legal entity subject to international law. Although member nations make up the majority of international organizations, other entities including businesses, nonprofit groups, and other international organizations may also be present. States and other bodies may also have observer status.

On the other hand, the term "internally displaced persons" (IDPs) is frequently interpreted differently by different academics and researchers. IDPs are individuals or groups of individuals who have been compelled to leave their homes or places of residence due to armed conflict, persistent human rights violations, internal turmoil, and natural or man-made disasters, according to Ocha (2003).

According to OHCHR (2007), which agreed with the aforementioned viewpoint, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups of individuals who have been forced or compelled to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, particularly as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters.

According to Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011), there are two key characteristics of IDPs: the movement is coerced or otherwise involuntary, and it occurs within national borders. Armed conflict, violence, violations of human rights, and disasters are some of the most frequent reasons of involuntary movements. It is significant to notice that these factors are similar in that they force individuals to leave their homes and deny them access to the most fundamental defenses, including social networks, services, and sources of livelihood.

Movement within national borders is the second aspect of the IDPs. IDPs are anticipated to have the same rights as the rest of the population (those who have not been relocated), as they are still legally under the protection of the national authority of their place of habitual residence, unlike refugees who have lost that protection (Durosaro and Ajiboye, 2011).

It is instructive to state that there is difference between IDPs and refugees, while IDPs are persons who are displaced internally that are within national borders, refugees are persons who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.

From the above it is clear that, IDPs are individuals or groups of individuals who are forcibly removed from their homes due to violence, human rights violations, or armed conflict and relocated to another site, which may be one of the adjacent villages, urban centers, or IDP camps. It is an unpleasant situation in which the persons affected by conflicts, disasters or human right violations

suffer untold economic hardship, psychological trauma and social dislocation.

International Organizations and the Management of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State

Benue State has been one among the states that have been faced with the problem of managing IDPs in the country; many people in recent times have been displaced in the state as a result of herders and farmers' conflict, communal conflict and flood. It is important to state insecurity occasioned by the prolonged period of confrontation between herders and farmers accounts for 95% of the IDPs in the state. Statistics indicates that 427,814 displaced persons have been displaced in Benue State and are taking refuge in official and unofficial IDPs camps.

Table 1. Unofficial IDP Camps in Benue State in 2023

S/no.	Name of Camp/Community	No. of IDPs
1.	Abagena Community	7,691
2.	Abeda Camp	2,668
3.	Abeda Community	22,949
4.	Agan Camp	4,798
5.	Agan Community	5,517
6.	Agatu	65,347
7.	Angwan Ochonu	4,951
8.	Anini Village	4,962
9.	Anyiin Community	65,496
10.	Daudu Community	43,344
11.	FHA	4,353
12.	Gbajimba Community	28,875
13.	Gwer West	60,243
14.	Ichwa	9,587
15.	Kwande	9,465
16.	LGEA NASME	23,151
17.	LGEA Tyodugh	5,672
18.	NEPA Quarters	8,008

19.	Ogiri Ajene	9,506
20.	Okpokwu	4,080
21.	Tionsha	10,500
22.	Ugba Community	8,651
23.	Ugbokpo	10,000
24.	Adoka	8,000
	Total	427,814

Source: SEMA (2023)

Table 2: Showing official IDP Camps in Benue State still in Existence 2023

S/no	Names of Camp	LGA.	No. of IDPs
1.	Abegena Camp	Makurdi	8,210
2.	Dauda Camp I	Guma	5851
3.	Dauda Camp II	Guma	20,172
4.	Gbajimba Camp	Guma	29,500
	Total		63,333

Source: SEMA (2023)

Any scenario of human displacement due to conflict or natural disaster, is the responsibility of any responsive government, whether federal or state, to provide displaced individuals with shelter and security. In light of this, the State Emergency Management Agency of Benue State initiated the first response by setting up camps for the IDPs. In order to offer IDPs in Benue State with temporary shelter, camps had to be established, according to the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). Because the displacement was unanticipated, SEMA was compelled to set up some camps in public areas like schools. Some of these camps are located in Anyiin, Ugba, Gbajimba, Daudu I and Daudu II and Abagena in Makurdi, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas (Etim and Nta, 2021).

According to the information provided by Medecins Sans Frontieres, it is unknown how many people have been forced to leave the state (Etim and Nta, 2021). The majority of displaced

persons reside outside of the IDPs' official camps created by SEMA. SEMA supported this assertion made by MSF, stating that IDPs living in roughly 22 camps across the state are created by IDPs themselves in Makurdi, Agatu, Guma, Gwer-West, Kwande, Ugba, Okpokwu and Logo Local Government Areas. As can be seen in table 1 above, these unofficial camps collectively served as homes for more than 409,814 displaced people. Within the constraints of the available resources, SEMA also supplied some habitation facilities in these camps, such as toilets, boreholes, and makeshift clinics. To make the camps more habitable, the IDPs are being given some non-food and food items. The non-food items include: mattresses, blankets, mats, mosquito nets, cloths and slippers. Others include cooking utensils such as stove, pots, plates and buckets.

Additionally, the Agency has kept delivering some essential food products to camp homes. A few examples of these foods are yam, rice, milk, noodles, guinea-corn, eggs, and drinks like garri. Also, the state government continues to give kids access to health care facilities, clean water, and other educational support programs through SEMA. Since the establishment of the IDP camps, the federal government and some state governments and other spirited individuals have come to support the Benue state government (Etim and Nta, 2021).

International humanitarian organizations have stepped in to help the government to bring succor to the plights of the IDPs in Benue. International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been assisting in the area of housing by proving tent houses. The IDPs in the camps have received food supplies from the Red Cross. MSF, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) has intervened to address health care challenges. For instance, MSF provided and continues to offer free primary healthcare to about 8,000 displaced persons in four camps.

Malaria is the most typical ailment treated in the camps, and its prevalence rises throughout the rainy season. Acute watery diarrhea and skin infections like scabies brought on by the terrible sleeping conditions in the camps are among the other illnesses. Depending on the needs and gaps found, the UNFPA manages the IDPs' protection and means of sustenance in some camps and health care services in others. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) on the other hand supplies water and sanitation as well as provide for the educational needs of the children in the camps. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and SEMA have frequently managed and coordinated the camps in terms of registering IDPs and providing shelter, according to the documents that are now available.

Table 3: Indicating areas of Intervention by International Organizations in Benue IDP Camps

S/no	Area of Intervention	International Partner	Camp of Intervention
1.	Health	Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I Daudu II, Gbajimba and Abegena Makurdi, Guma and Logo LGAs
		UNFPA Red Cross	Daudu and Gbajimba
2.	Water and Sanitation	UNICEF	Gbajimba, Daudu I and II, Abagena
		MSF	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II

3.	Shelter	International Organization on Migration (IOM)	Anyiin, Ugba, Dauda I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena
4.	Food Items	Red Cross	Daudu I and II and Abagena
5.	Protection/li velihood	UNFPA	Anyiin, Ugba, Dauda I and II, Gbajimba and
		UNHCR	Abagena, Daudu I and II
6.	Education	UNICEF	Abagena, Daudu I and II and Gbajimba
7.	Camp management and coordination	SEMA/IOM	Anyiin, Ugba, Dauda I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena
8.	Shelter	USAID	Daudu I and II and Abagena

Source: SEMA (2023)

Furthermore, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United State Agency for International development (USAID) in recent times, on the 19th July, 2023 distributed materials to flood victims of 2022 in Makurdi, among the items distributed to the victims include; sanitary and hygiene kits, buckets toilets soaps, touch lights, a solar rechargeable lamps, toothbrushes, pieces of zincs and woods, nails and internal locks, among others (SEMA, 2023)

Aside international organizations, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as; Arcom Initiative (AI), Eunice Spring of Life Foundation (ESLF), Kwaghfan Foundation, Jedidiah

Foundation and Heart Land Internal Alliance, have over the years intervened at various intervals with different strategies to provide the IDPs in the state using intervention strategies like food, water, access to protection and security, educational services; and health services. ESLF is assisting IDPs in the area of health care service, Arcom Initiative provides water service Jedidiah Foundation provides food stuffs; Heart Land Internal Alliance provides HIV and AIDS drugs while Kwaghfan Foundation is assisting in the area of primary and secondary education (SEMA, 2023).

Despite international organization intervention to complement the efforts of the state government in addressing the challenges of IDPs in the state, the challenges persist as IDPs are still battling with problems of hunger, malnutrition, overcrowding, poor sanitation, joblessness, sickness, lack of access to education, insecurity, inadequate health care service delivery, a situation that has resulted to death of some of IDPs and force some IDPs to flee the camps

The Challenges faced by the Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State

The internally displaced people in Benue State face a number of difficulties in their various camps. The Global Protection Cluster Working Group (2010) succinctly described the difficulties faced by IDPs, stating that in addition to being ejected from their homes, IDPs also suffer from particular forms of deprivation, such as losing their homes and frequently dealing with heightened tension or specific protection risks. Among these dangers are: armed assaults and abuse while fleeing for safety; family separation, including a rise in the number of separated and unaccompanied children; increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, which affects women and children in particular; arbitrary taking of land, homes, and other properties; and relocation to hostile environments, where they face stigma and marginalization,

discrimination, or harassment (The Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010).

Given that every IDP in Benue state has been uprooted from their place of residence, finding housing and other forms of support seem to be the most common problems they confront. According to a study by Ukase and Jato (2020), housing is the biggest obstacle for everyone interviewed in IDP camps in Benue State.

Food scarcity is another significant issue IDPs in Benue state must deal with. Research demonstrates that the food provided in the camps is not only rationed, but also of poor quality. For instance, the quality of the food offered occasionally lacks essential components and nutrients, resulting in hunger, disease, and occasionally even death. Another issue with IDPs in Benue state is inadequate clothing. Lack of clothing compromises both one's health and one's sense of dignity because it is a fundamental human necessity (Etim and Nta, 2022).

The IDPs are exposure to bad weather, lack of access to sufficient food supplies, and lack of access to appropriate clothing frequently combine to pose a greater challenge, which is a health challenge. The most common illnesses in the camps are malaria, typhoid, diarrhea, and skin infections. The hygiene and health care standard among the IDPs are low. Limited access to healthcare facilities and healthcare professionals' casual demeanor exacerbate the lack of adequate health information and sanitary problems.

Most of the time, children in IDP camps are not immunized, and women who are menstruating do not have access to toiletries. This issue is made worse, in Ukase and Jato's opinion (2020), by their inability to visit a gynecologist for regular check-up during pregnancy and child birth. Medical resources and equipment are insufficient and do not meet the IDPs' health demands. There are hospitals and clinics that are provided by various agencies and international organizations to treat illnesses and injuries, but their capacity is insufficient. As a result, there are a lot of cases that are being sent to hospitals outside of the camps at the expense of the

IDPs. As a result, even when significant sickness is diagnosed, the majority of cases go untreated. The majority of IDPs turn to herbal or conventional medicine to treat themselves when faced with these challenges.

IDPs in Benue State have experienced significant setbacks in their schooling as a result of being forced to leave their ancestral homes. Contrary to the United Nations Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement which is to the effect that the authorities concerned shall ensure that such person, in particular children, receive education which shall be free and compulsory at the primary level, considerable number of children in the IDP camps, especially unofficial camps have no school. Where schools are found at all, they are adult schools meant for adults. Hence, those in school above primary level face even greater danger of dropping out of school (Etim and Nta, 2022).

The IDPs' expulsion from their ancestral homes implies that they eventually lose access to their source of livelihood. It should be mentioned that the majority of IDPs are farmers who were compelled to leave their farmsteads behind after being violently attacked by herders. They do not have access to land or other farm inputs in their "new houses," making it impossible for them to participate in profitable farming. Due to their inaction, the IDPs are now jobless, and their degree of poverty has gotten worse. This particular problem is so acute because almost 100 percent of the IDPs are unemployed (Etim and Nta, 2022).

Conclusion

Benue State has been one among the states that have been faced with the problem of managing IDPs in the country. It is estimated that 427,814 people have in recent times been displaced in the state as a result of herders and farmers conflict and incidence of flood. This situation has resulted in humanitarian emergency in the state. This paper assessed the various humanitarian interventions in the IDPs camps to ascertain the conditions of the IDPs and the

effectiveness of the interventions by the international organizations. The displacement of the people in the state from 2014 to date has necessitated the establishment of IDPs camps by the Benue State government.

The camps are managed by SEMA. SEMA has the responsibility to care for IDPs living in the various camps within the local governments by providing them with food, shelter, health care services and education, among others. The establishment of the camps by Benue State has attracted the attention of donor agencies, international organizations, etc. that provide humanitarian interventions in the areas of shelter, feeding, education and health care delivery. The paper discovered that the interventions by international organizations in the various camps across the state at different intervals were useful and helpful to a moderate extent but more assistance is still required as the living conditions of the IDPs are still deplorable and vulnerable. The study therefore concludes that, the challenges of managing IDPs in Benue State is not insurmountable given an objective analysis of the causative factors and adoption of correct institutional mechanisms to address the multi-dimensional issues involved.

What then is the way forward?

In order to enhance the management of IDPs in Benue State certain recommendations have been derived from data presented and findings of this study. International organizations should provide more services and materials to the IDPs and make sure that the materials provided by them are not diverted by government officials. Also, the Benue State government should fight corruption and ensure a direct link between the government and the IDPs. Finally, the government should make more efforts in addressing the farmers/herders conflict which is the major source of the internal displacement of persons in the state so that people can return to their ancestral homes and continue with their economic, social and farming activities.

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