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## STRATEGIES FOR RESETTLEMENT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) IN FARMING COMMUNITIES OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the strategies for resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in farming communities of Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) out of the five (5) areas affected by displacement. Sixty five respondents were selected using a snow-ball technique from each of the 3 selected areas to give a total sample size of one hundred and ninety-five (195) respondents. Data for the study were collected with the aid of an interview schedule and analyzed with the use of frequency, percentage, and mean. The main causes of displacement expressed by the respondents include: boundary clashes with neighbouring community (mean = 3.45), lingering community leadership tussles (mean = 3.28), armed cult attacks and activities (mean = 2.68). The resettlement needs of the displaced persons include: relief food supplies on return for at least 6 months (mean = 3.46), provision of tools and implements for bush clearing in abandoned homes (mean = 3.35), reconstruction and rebuilding of houses destroyed during displacement (mean = 3.18). Strategies for resettlement of displaced persons in the study area include: distribution of resettlement start-up packages (mean = 3.60), assessment and declaration of safe areas for resettlement (mean = 3.46), need and situation analysis of returnees (mean = 3.33). Governments, non-governmental organizations should increase effort in properly identifying displaced persons, raising awareness to their plight, and facilitating the work of protection and assistance for IDPs.

**Keywords:** Resettlement strategies, Internally Displaced Persons, farming communities

### **INTRODUCTION**

In many parts of the world, wars, communal clashes, ethnic violence, natural and man-made disaster are recurrent. The occurrence of the foregoing phenomena results in loss of human lives, properties, means of livelihood and displacement of the population. One of the contemporary challenges facing the Nigerian state is how to provide succor to the internal displaced persons (IDPs), occasioned by incessant violent attacks perpetrated by various armed groups and other forms of crises in various parts of the country. Since the end of the Nigerian civil war, there have been several civil strife, agitations and violent clashes leading to loss of hundreds of thousands of human lives, destruction of properties worth millions of naira and the attendant displacement of millions of people from their homes to safe areas. Obviously, the most affected persons are vulnerable groups such as children, aged and women who are exposed to severe socio-economic and political challenges (Durosaro and Ajiboye, 2011).

Although, there is no existing accurate official record on the total figure of persons displaced by the Boko Haram insurgents, it is reported that in 2013 alone, 300,000 people fled the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, out of which seventy percent of them are said to be women and children (Human Right Watch (HRW), 2014). It is also on record that in 2013 alone, 470,500 persons were displaced across communities in some parts of Nigeria due to Boko Haram insurgency and other humanitarian emergencies (HRW, 2014). Besides, available statistics shows that Nigeria has

the highest number of displaced persons in Africa which is estimated at 3.3 million people as at the year 2014 (Nigerian Red Cross (NRC), 2014). The figure includes those displaced as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, communal conflicts, flood disasters and incessant clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the northeast. On a global scale, Nigeria is ranked behind Syria, with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million (NRC, 2014). Statistics from HRW (2014) asserts that the IDPs figures have risen unprecedentedly in the preceding years due largely to increasing number of Boko Haram attacks, heavy-handed counter-insurgency and ongoing inter-communal violent conflicts in some communities across the country (Petraeus and Amos, 2006). For instance, the clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in states of Benue, Taraba, Zamfara and Kaduna displaced 100,000 persons in 2014 (National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), 2015). Over the years, the growth of IDPs figure in Nigeria is quite alarming. As at April, 2015, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that 1,538,982 people were forced to flee their homes in Nigeria. This figures include people displaced as a result of brutal attacks by Boko Haram insurgency, the government led counter-insurgency operations against the group, ongoing inter-communal clashes. The biggest rise in the number of IDPs was recorded in Borno state, one of the Northeastern states ravaged by Boko Haram insurgency, followed by Adamawa, and Yobe states. As at April 2015, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) assessment, set up by the Internal Migration Organization (IMO) identified 1,491,706

IDPs in states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Born, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe with about six percent of this figure attributed to inter communal clashes while the remaining ninety four percent of these figure is caused by Boko Haram insurgency. NEMA recorded an additional 47,276 IDPs in Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kano, and Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT), in February, 2015 (NEMA, 2015). This brings the total number of registered internally displaced persons in 2015 to 1,538,982 in Northeastern states. The above figures may have soared due to other forms of disaster in the affected states in the North. The situation in the southern states of Nigeria is not different as many farming communities are affected with the attendant displacement of the rural population leading to serious humanitarian crisis.

In response to the above situation, governments in Nigeria and some non-governmental organizations have made efforts to address the plights of displaced persons. Such efforts include the provision of temporary camps for the displaced persons especially in the northern parts of Nigeria, supply of relief materials, social welfare services and other emergency supplies. However, in the southern states of Nigeria, there are no officially established camps rather displaced persons find refuge in neighbouring communities. Consequently, these individuals are faced with severe socio-economic problems, health and environmental challenges, loss of livelihoods, insecurity, inadequate foods and good drinking water, overcrowding, poor living and sanitary conditions, social discriminations, sexual harassment, child labour, early marriage and its attendant teenage pregnancy, intimidation, humiliation and other forms of social exclusions in their host communities.

In view of the above situations, there is a conscious and continual search for an enduring solution to the problems of the displaced persons. This may likely be achieved through appropriate plan for resettlement of the affected population using appropriate strategies. Against this background, the study explored the strategies for resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in farming communities in Rivers State. In specific terms, the study described the socio-demographic characteristics of the displaced persons in Rivers State, ascertained the causes of displacement of persons in the study area, identified the resettlement needs of the respondents and explored the strategies adopted for the resettlement of the displaced persons in the study area.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State lies on latitude  $7^{\circ} 00' 1$  east and longitude  $4^{\circ} 75' 1$  north and bounded in the north by Abia and Imo States, in the south by the Atlantic

ocean, in the east by Akwa Ibom State and in the west by Bayelsa and Delta States. The population of the study was composed of all persons displaced from their homes and communities for one reason or the other. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) out of the five (5) areas affected by displacement in Rivers State, and 65 respondents were selected using a snow-ball technique from each of the 3 selected areas to give a total sample size of one hundred and ninety- five (195) respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured interview schedule designed in two sections and validated by the researchers. Section A sought for responses on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B was divided into three parts. Part 1 contained 20-item clusters on possible causes of displacement of persons; Part 2 contained 17-items clusters on the resettlement needs of the displaced persons while Part 3 contained item-statements on possible strategies for resettlement of displaced persons. Responses to each of the items in Sections B were measured using a 4-point Likert-type rating scale of agreement, where Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagreed (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The values of the scale (4, 3, 2 and 1) were summed up to obtain 10. The mean value of the sum gave 2.50, which became the benchmark for accepting any item as possible causes of displacement of persons, resettlement needs of the displaced persons and strategies for resettlement of displaced persons. Data were analyzed with the use of frequency, percentage, and mean.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Socio-demographic characteristics** – Result on Table 1 shows that the majority (65.8%) of the internally displaced persons are males and 34.2% are females. This implies that in the study area, males are more affected by displacement than females. This might be linked to the fact that males rather than females cannot condone acts of aggression and consequently may fight back or forced to abandon their communities for safety. Majority of the respondents (67.5%) were within 20-39 years age followed by those within 30-39 years of age (30.0%). This indicate that majority of the displaced persons in the study area were young adults. This is obvious since these categories of the population are prone to aggression, group action and counter-action tantamount to break down of law and order. The trend could result in wastage and reduction in human capacity development critical to support rural labour, output and productivity. Results in Table 1 further revealed that majority of the respondents were married (60.8%). This places on them family responsibilities that increase pressure for their return and reunification with their family members.

It was also found that majority of respondents 40% had a minimum of primary education while 29.2% had no formal education indicating that majority of the displaced persons could have low capacity for paid skills and livelihood interests as a result of their level of education. Majority of them (49.2%) were involved in trading. This agrees with Nwaogwugwu and Orlunwu (2016) that found trading as a means of livelihood among agrarian migrants. Results on household size indicate that 47.5% and 37.5% of the respondents respectively

had household sizes of 1-3 persons and 4-6 persons respectively. This indicates that the displaced persons are young family people. On the duration of displacement, the result shows that majority of the respondents (86.4%) have been displaced for 1-5 years ago. This might be the reason why in the last two years government in Rivers State has deemed internal displacement of persons as an emergency situation for urgent attention to pave way for development in the affected communities.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	79	65.8
Female	41	34.2
<b>Age category</b>		
20-29 years	81	67.5
30-39 years	36	30.0
40-49 years	3	2.5
50-59 years	0	00.0
60-69 years	0	00.0
70 years and above	0	00.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	73	60.8
Single	47	39.2
Divorced	0	00.0
Widowed	0	00.0
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Non-Formal Education	35	29.2
Primary Education	47	40.8
Secondary Education	27	22.5
Tertiary Education	9	7.5
<b>Occupation</b>		
Fishing	21	17.5
Farming	26	21.7
Civil Service	14	11.7
Trading	59	49.2
<b>Household Size</b>		
1-3 persons	57	47.5
4-6 persons	45	37.5
7-9 persons	18	15.0
10 persons and above	0	00.0
<b>Duration of displacement</b>		
1-5 years	91	86.4
6-10 years	27	12.7
11-15 years	2	0.9
16-20 years	0	00.0
21 years and above	0	00.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

**Causes of displacement of person -**  
Entries in Table 2 show the main causes of displacement of persons in the study area. The result shows that boundary clash with neighbouring community (mean = 3.45) was a major cause of displacement. This is obvious since actions associated with boundary clashes are characterised

with wanton destruction of life and properties in most Nigerian communities. Also, lingering community leadership (mean = 3.20) was indicated as a cause of displacement. The finding is evidenced by the level of destruction occasioned by tussles for the control of either political power or traditional stool in which many individuals either

lose their lives or abandon the communities. The result on Table 2 indicates that land takeover and quit notice by government (mean = 3.03) was among the causes of displacement of persons in the study area. This arises on the heels of government acquisition of community lands for siting of projects and eviction of residents in such lands. Often times, adequate provisions are not made for relocation and resettlement of the affected families and communities resulting in displacement, destitution and misery. The finding is in line with the account of Centre on Human Rights and Evictions and the Social and Economic Right Action Centre in 2008 which suggest that over 2 million people were forcibly evicted as a result of land takeover and quit notice by government. The death of bread winner (mean = 2.99) was indicated as a cause of displacement in the study area. This finding gives credence to the fact that vulnerability of certain segment of the population is occasioned by the death of a breadwinner. This gives rise to orphanage, widowhood and destitution with daunting evidences in Nigerian society, especially where social security apparatus are inadequate to cater for these vulnerable members of society. Furthermore, man-made disaster (mean = 2.95) is found as causing displacement. The finding may be as a result of abuse and wrong use of resources in the environment consequent upon flooding, erosion, fire outbreak, etc. leading to displacement. Also, Fulani herdsmen attack (mean = 2.90) was found to be possible causes of displacement. Incidences associated with destructive activities and clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in various communities in Nigerian could give rise

to national emergency. This finding is valid in line with NEMA (2015), which states that Fulani herdsmen attacks displaced over 100,000 persons in 2014. It was also found that insecurity of life and properties (mean = 2.85) caused displacement in the study area. This finding corroborates earlier accounts that thousands of persons are killed and/or displaced as a result of reoccurring inter-communal conflicts and politically motivated violence leading to consistently large waves of internal displacement (NRC, 2014). Arbitrary arrest and detention of persons (mean= 2.74) is indicated as another cause of displacement of persons. This finding might be linked to the heavy militarization in the study area since the emergence of armed activities by the youths in the oil rich Niger Delta region in which the study area is located. Furthermore, the result revealed that deprivation and neglect by family members (mean = 2.72) is among the causes for displacement of persons in the study area. This finding attests to the poor conditions of most households in the study area. Also family land disputes (mean = 2.68) is indicated as one cause of displacement. Land holdings and tenure issues has been age-long with far reaching consequences on the vulnerable members of the family. Contest for fair share in family land holding in many farming communities has been disastrous. Demolition exercise as a result of government projects (mean = 2.65) was indicated to lead to displacement. This finding confirms the view of Robinson (2003), who expanded the scope of the causes of displacement to those displaced as a result of development projects.

**Table 2: Causes of displacement of persons as expressed by the respondents**

Items	Mean score	Remark
Boundary clash with neighbouring community	3.45	Accept
Lingering community leadership	3.28	Accept
Land takeover and quit notice by government	3.03	Accept
Death of a bread winner	2.99	Accept
Man-made disaster	2.95	Accept
Fulani herdsmen attack	2.90	Accept
Insecurity of life and properties	2.85	Accept
Arbitrary arrest and detention	2.74	Accept
Deprivation and neglect by family members	2.72	Accept
Armed cult attacks and activities	2.68	Accept
Inter-state war	2.65	Accept
Family land disputes	2.63	Accept
Demolition exercise as a result of government projects	2.60	Accept
Forcible return to place of danger and violence	2.38	Reject
Natural disaster	2.32	Reject
Violation of fundamental human rights	2.22	Reject

Source: Field survey, 2017

Note: Items with mean score  $\geq 2.50$  implies acceptance while items with mean score  $\leq 2.50$  implies rejection.

**Resettlement needs of internally displaced persons** - Results of the resettlement needs of internally displaced persons in the study area are presented in Table 3. It was found that recovery of properties and possessions lost during displacement (mean = 3.05) was among the resettlement needs among displaced persons in the study area. This is because during crisis, properties are consciously targeted for destruction. Those possessions represent their investment in which they build their livelihoods and of course their intended legacy. Results further show that rebuilding of livelihood (mean = 2.95) was among their resettlement needs. The finding is valid because they have been deprived of their homes and sometimes their land and livelihoods which results in their lack of access to necessities of life such as food, water and shelter (Egwu, 2011). Results in Table 3 also reveal that relief food supplies on return for at least 6 months (mean = 2.85) was among their resettlement needs. Access to food is critical to such people whose livelihoods have been destroyed in the course of displacement. Also, provision of reunification of members of the family separated by displacement (mean = 2.77) was found to be a resettlement need of displaced persons in the study area. It is obvious that in such critical conditions preceding displacement, loss of persons and death could be taken for granted. Because of the bond of relationship that exists among family members, reunification becomes paramount as members of the family and community begin to return home. Results in Table 3 indicate reconstruction and rebuilding of houses destroyed during displacement (mean = 2.63) as a resettlement need. This is because shelter is one of

the basic needs of man. Since abandoned homes could be dilapidated within the period of displacement, it becomes necessary for such facilities to be rebuilt. It was found that the supply of farm inputs (seeds, livestock, tools) (mean = 2.61) was indicated by the respondents as their resettlement need. Farm inputs are prerequisite for restarting their livelihoods especially those whose major means of living is farming. The finding is in line with Egwu (2011) who noted that assessment of the appropriate quantities of seeds and farm implements to jump start their farming activities become very paramount. Results in Table 3 also reveal that special welfare services for the vulnerable (mean = 2.53) was a resettlement need as indicated by the respondents. Vulnerable group which include children, the sick, aged persons, pregnant women, etc. were often the most in need of humanitarian aids. Also, provision of household items (utensils, etc.) (mean = 2.50) was found to be among the resettlement needs. This might arise since these items may have been lost or damaged due to abandonment over time. Furthermore, results in Table 3 show that repair and rehabilitations of boreholes and other essential amenities (mean = 2.50) is indicated as resettlement need. It is critical since community facilities are pillaged and vandalized during periods of lawlessness and crisis. Also, facilitating replacement of lost document in the course of displacement (mean = 2.50) was indicated by the respondents as their resettlement need. This might be as a result of the importance of documents in certifying claims of members and groups in the society.

**Table 3: Respondents' rating on the Resettlement needs of internally displaced persons in the study area**

Items	Mean score	Remark
Recovery of properties and possessions lost during displacement	3.05	Accept
Rebuilding of livelihood	2.96	Accept
Relief food supplies on return for at least 6 months	2.85	Accept
Provision for reunification of members of the family separated by displacement	2.78	Accept
Reconstruction and rebuilding of houses destroyed during displacement	2.63	Accept
Supply of farm input (seeds, livestock, tools)	2.61	Accept
Special welfare services for the vulnerable	2.53	Accept
Provision of household items (utensils, etc.)	2.50	Accept
Repair and rehabilitation of boreholes and other essential amenities	2.50	Accept
Facilitating replacement of lost document in the course of displacement	2.50	Accept
Supply of temporary shelter materials	2.40	Reject
Provision of tools and implement for bush clearing in abandoned homes	2.33	Reject
Reparation of lost properties and cost	2.32	Reject
Restitution of properties lost during displacement	2.24	Reject
Compensation for loss during displacement	1.84	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Note: Items with mean score  $\geq 2.50$  implies acceptance while items with mean score  $\leq 2.50$  implies rejection.

**Strategies for resettlement of internally displaced persons** - Results on the strategies for resettlement of internally displaced persons are presented in Table 4. It is revealed that provision for freedom to choose alternative resettlement in any other part of the state or country (mean = 3.44) was indicated by the respondents. The finding is in line with the fundamental human right. The right of choice of residence is important to avoid coercing threatened and vulnerable members of the society to return to unsafe areas. Results also revealed that need and situation analysis of returnees and returning areas (mean = 3.41) was among the strategies for resettlement of displaced persons. This finding is critical to ascertain and generate appropriate data about the status of the returnees, security state of the areas for return and the state of infrastructure to accommodate the returnees. Furthermore, it was indicated that provision of counselling and community-based initiatives for returnees (mean = 3.38) was an accepted strategy for resettlement. This becomes necessary in view of the fact that the affected persons have had their psyche diminished and demoralized. They likely need counselling to give them a sense of self

direction and belonging. The finding show that mobilization of displaced persons to return home by political leader, radio campaigns and orientation agencies (mean = 2.95) is a resettlement strategy. The finding is valid since awareness is critical for the affected person and other members of the society to appreciate measures put in place for resettlement. It was also found that documentation and registration of returnees (mean = 2.79) was a strategy. This finding is relevant because it offers a necessary data bank for tracking of persons and provides information for future planning and reference for government and non-governmental organization. The absence of such documentation may likely prove counter-productive and in line with Egwu (2011) has created a serious problem in the response and management of victims of internal displacement with government adopting transient and unsustainable measures. The result in Table 3 indicated coordination and monitoring of return, resettlement and reintegration exercises (mean = 2.72) as a strategy. This finding is likely to provide a springboard for the evaluation of the resettlement exercise and set precedence for future engagements in similar or related situations.

**Table 4: Respondents' rating on the strategies for resettlement of internally displaced persons**

Items	Mean score	Remark
Provision for freedom to choose alternative resettlement in any other part of the state or country.	3.44	Accept
Need and situation analysis of returnees and returning areas.	3.41	Accept
Provision of counseling and community based initiative.	3.38	Accept
resettlement in any other part of the state.		Accept
Mobilization of displaced persons to return home by political leader, radio campaigns and orientation agencies,	2.95	Accept
Documentation and registration of returnees.	2.79	Accept
Coordination and monitoring of return, resettlement, and reintegration exercise.	2.72	Accept
Distribution of resettlement startup packages.	2.42	Reject
Reconstruction of community access roads and other social amenities.	2.40	Reject
Enforcement of legal framework in respect of right and privileges of returnees.	2.31	Reject
Family tracing and unification support systems.	2.15	Reject
Assessment and declaration of state areas for resettlement.	2.07	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

NOTE: Items with mean score  $\geq 2.50$  implies acceptance while items with mean score  $\leq 2.50$  implies rejection.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the main resettlement strategy is the provision for freedom to choose alternative resettlement in any other part of the state.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Based on the findings it is recommended that Governments, non-governmental organizations should increase effort in properly identifying displaced persons, raising awareness to their plight, and facilitating the work of protection and assistance for IDPs.

2. Government in Nigeria should develop a national policy framework for the treatment of incidences of displaced persons.

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