

The Socio-Economic and Political Implications of Forced Migration for Internally Displaced Families in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Forced migration is a global phenomenon that has a significant impact on families. In Nigeria, the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram and other terrorist activities has displaced millions, many of whom live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. This article examines the socio-economic and political implications of forced migration for IDP families in Nigeria. The article begins by reviewing the literature on forced migration, IDPs, and their socio-economic and political implications. It then presents the findings of a mixed-method study that was conducted with IDP families in Nigeria. The study used a combination of research interviews, focus groups, and case studies to collect data on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of IDP families. The findings of the study show that forced migration has a significant impact on the socio-economic and political status of IDP families. IDP families experience high levels of poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. They also face challenges in accessing education and healthcare. In addition, IDP families are often marginalised and discriminated against. The article concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for policy and practice. It argues that the Nigerian government, international organisations, and civil society need to take steps to address the socio-economic and political challenges facing IDP families. It recommends providing basic services, promoting social and economic inclusion, and supporting political participation in IDP families to alleviate the hardship occasioned by the situation in which they find themselves.

Keywords: Family, Migration, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Refugees

1. Introduction

The challenges of internally displaced persons, either directly or indirectly, have had tremendous implications for national development. Forced migration due to violence, banditry, kidnappings, and various forms of terrorism has had dire consequences on the fortunes of families across the country. According to Tajudeen and Adebayo (2013: 1), “the gravity of recent violent disruption and destruction of lives and properties being perpetrated by the Boko Haram (BH) attacks, and because development as a discourse in the sociological realm is multifaceted in dimensions, it can therefore be viewed from economic, social, political, religious, educational, health and in fact, all aspects of human endeavour.”¹ Therefore, the rise of BH is a grave threat to Nigeria's growth and development, considering that instability and violence are critical factors of underdevelopment in many Third-World countries.

Additionally, Nigeria has faced political instability and governance challenges, including corruption, inadequate provision of public services, and inequality. These issues can lead to social unrest, protest movements, and conflicts, which may result in forced migration as people seek better living conditions and opportunities elsewhere.

Exacerbating the factors above is the economy of the country. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of economic opportunities drive many Nigerians to migrate for better prospects. Economic disparities between regions and rural-urban migration also contribute to internal displacement within the country. Developmental indices show that many states in northern Nigeria are below the poverty line. This may explain why the problem of forced migration is more prevalent in the region than in any other part.

This study will examine the negative consequences these have had on the healthy development of families in Nigeria. These will be examined from the social, economic, and political ramifications of the complex and varied implications for the family in Nigeria today.

¹ A Tajudeen and O. Adebayo, “Issues of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sociological Research* 4:1(2013): 1

2. Methodology And Scope

This study centres on the implications of forced migration as it affects the socio-economic and political fortunes of displaced persons in Nigeria. The scope of the study is on Nigeria but with emphasis on the northern landscape of the country, which has witnessed a plethora of violence and crimes against humanity and a substantial number of persons forced to leave their ancestral homes. The number of IDPs has risen exponentially over the years. Available statistics show that the country has the third-largest number of IDPs in Africa. In the year 2020 alone, it counted over 2.7 million people.² The descriptive research relies heavily on secondary sources such as books, articles, magazines, newspapers (print and online), and commentaries written on the subject matter. The study used these invaluable resources to review relevant literature on migration, family, internally displaced persons, and the socio-economic and political implications forced migration exerts on families. This was intended to provide a description, summary, and critical evaluation and analysis of the findings and discussions on vulnerable families using social, economic, and political variables. Drawing from the above, the study concludes by recommending concrete and practical suggestions and reforms that are needed to ameliorate the plight of families caught in this web of violence.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study highlights the plight of displaced persons and families due to forced migration. The specific objective is to draw attention to these vulnerable groups' peculiar challenges and identify gaps that could be filled to better the situation that IDPs face daily.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. How did the social conditions of IDPs affect their welfare and integral human development in Nigeria?
- ii. How can IDPs be empowered to improve their economic condition for human flourishing?

² Doris Sasu, "Number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria 2013-2020," In <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237374/number-of-internally-displaced-persons-in-nigeria/> Accessed June 30, 2023.

- iii. What are the educational needs that militate against the human development of IDPs in Nigeria?
- iv. What problems impede the political integration of IDPs in Nigeria?

5. Definitions Of Terms

Migration

Migration involves the movement of people from one place to the other. Some of these migration flows may be transnational, transcontinental, or within the borders of a particular country. People migrate for many reasons. Some migrate for economic reasons, searching for better prospects since their home countries do not offer them such opportunities. Others migrate for business or reasons of investments to maximize business opportunities in the receiving countries. Still, others are forced to migrate due to conflict, violence, and the spate of banditry and kidnappings to secure their lives and property.

Refugee

A refugee is a person who has been forced to flee their home country due to war, violence, persecution, or armed conflict. Refugees often face death or severe harm if they return home. They may have lost everything they own, including their homes, possessions, and loved ones. Refugees are entitled to international protection and assistance. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as a person who;³

“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

³ The UN Refugee Agency, “The 1951 Refugee Convention,” <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>, 14.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes but have not crossed the internationally recognised boundaries of their country. Sometimes, IDPs are referred to as refugees, even though they do not fall within the legal definition of a refugee. However, refugees' and IDPs' needs and vulnerability are the same.

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide is growing alarmingly from a small number of 1.2 million people in 1982 to 14 million in 1986 to over 20 million by 1997. In 1970, the number of countries with IDPs stood at five but has now risen exponentially to 34 in 1996. According to the 2011 estimates of the UNHCR, the total number of displaced persons stands at around 15.5 million, and more than half of this number is in Africa and Asia. Of the number of internally displaced, the gender perspective is evident: more than half of the population of IDPs are women and children.⁴

In the 1990s, when the issue of IDPs was placed on the front burner, the United Nations, in its working documents, '*Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*,' defined IDPs in a broad perspective to cover a wide range of situations:

*"Persons or group 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 to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violation of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internally recognised State border."*⁵

Thousands of families have been displaced at various times in Nigeria by factors such as soil erosion, flooding, and other natural disasters. But by far, the greatest cause of IDPs are violence and internal armed conflicts.⁶ While there have been violence and conflicts in parts of the North, forcing families

⁴ Stephen Castles, "Toward a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation," *Sociology* 37:13(2003): 11.

⁵ Erin Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as Category of Concern," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 24:3(2005): 11.

⁶ A Tajudeen and O. Adebayo, "Issues of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Nigeria," 1.

to abandon the comforts of their homes and environment, the insurgency occasioned by the heinous activities of Boko Haram (BH), banditry, and kidnappings have been responsible for the internal displacement of millions of Nigerians across the country. These conflicts have displaced millions of people and forced them to flee their homes for safety and security.

The Family: Christian Perspective

Sacred Scripture underlines the importance and centrality of the family. After his creation, God saddled man and woman with the responsibility of the created order. The couple constituted the first form of communion between persons and was given the express permission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). It is in the family that one learns the love and faithfulness of the Lord and needs to respond to these (cf. Ex. 12: 25-27; 13:8, 14-15; Deut. 6:20-25; 13:7-11; I Sam. 3:13). It is through the family that children learn their first and most important lessons of practical wisdom, to which the virtues are connected (cf. Prov. 1:8-9; 4:1-4, 6:20-21; Sir. 3:1-16; 7:27-28). Children need a stable home to be raised to understand the meaning of life, health, relationships, career, family, and the consequences of actions taken so they are not misled.⁷ The book of Proverbs 22:6 has strong admonition on this: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” It behooves, therefore, that such a noble institution as the family should be safeguarded and given all the necessary attention to attain the moral, spiritual, psychological, educational, and religious upbringing as a *sine quo non* for the integral development of a nation.

Social Implications of Forced Migration

Human beings are naturally social beings and are naturally inclined towards such to attain their spiritual and material well-being. This need is realised in society within the family, the smallest unit of every society. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church calls the family the vital cell of society and gives it pride of place in its application section before work, economic life, politics, the international community, the environment

⁷ Ruth Magaji, “Christian Education and Sustainable Development of Children in Nigeria,” *Kaakaki Journal of Religious Studies* vol. 6, no. 1(2013): 35.

and peace.⁸ The family plays a vital role in forming and training individuals in responsibility, virtue, solidarity, and mutual self-giving. Disruption of these family roles through unplanned migration tends to compromise many families' ability to meet these responsibilities. This inability, in turn breeds dysfunctional children, miscreants, and criminals in the society since the atmosphere to nurture the seed of virtues, namely the family, no longer exists.⁹

Trafficking is another serious risk that increases when people are displaced, families are separated, and livelihoods are destroyed. Children who have lost their homes and even families are particularly at risk of being recruited into the cause of the insurgency, thereby suffering other physiological and psychological abuses. Their opportunities to escape these risks are diminished, in both the short and long term, by the disruption to formal education that displacement typically entails.

Forced migration occasioned by the spate of violence unleashed by a hapless civilian population has had grave consequences for human development and social life. According to Todd, "Surveys from various conflicts show that displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to indirect death due to social disruption and unsanitary conditions."¹⁰ Mooney, in analysing the fate of IDPs, sums up their social predicament in these words: "*Cut off from their land, traditional livelihood, and means of generating income and compelled to leave all but a few possessions behind, IDPs suddenly find themselves stripped of their means of survival. At the same time, it breaks up families and community support networks. As one recent study underscored, displacement leads to 'massive loss not only of commodities such as the home, income, land or other forms of property, but also of less tangible symbolic goods, such as cultural heritage, friendship*

⁸ Andrew Yuengert, "What is 'Sustainable Prosperity for All' in the Catholic Social Tradition," In *The True Wealth of Nations: Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life*, edited by D. K Finn. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 52.

⁹ Jonathan Yabiliyok, *Interreligious Education in Nigeria: Religious Education for Promoting Christian-Muslim Relations in Kaduna State*, (Abuja, Nigeria: Paulines Publications Africa),117.

¹⁰ Whitmore Todd, *Peacebuilding and Its Challenging Partners: Justice, Human Rights, Development and Solidarity*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books),166.

and a sense of belonging to a particular place.’ Its ‘pernicious effects on individuals, families and communities ‘are wide-ranging and include ‘impoverishment, social isolation, exclusion from health, welfare and education provision, the breakdown of social relationships and support structures, and the undermining of authority structures and social roles.’ Children are particularly affected as displacement not only disrupts their education and normal development but also frequently results in their being separated from their families in the chaos of flight, left to fend for themselves and at heightened risk of abuse. Compounding their plight, the displaced often are stigmatised and may also be viewed with suspicion and hostility in the areas to which they flee.”¹¹

Even when normalcy is restored to these war-weary communities, hardly do they attain the social and economic flourishing of the pre-conflict state. This is why conflicts and violence change the dynamics of not just the economy but also of social relations among people. According to Castles, . . . *Violence and forced migration are causes of social violence and forced migration also cause social transformation. They destroy economic resources, undermine traditional ways of life and break up communities. Forced migration is thus a factor which deepens underdevelopment, weakens social bonds and reduces the capacity of communities and societies to achieve positive change. Post-conflict reconstruction rarely leads to the restoration of the pre-conflict situation, but rather to new and often problematic social relationships.*¹²

By far, conflicts and violence affect women and children far greater than any group of persons. The current share of the world’s population of refugees and displaced people around the globe are women. Available evidence shows that forced migration flow and its impact are strongly gendered. Oloka-Onyango contends that “more than fifty per cent of the world’s displaced population live in Africa’ and women outnumber men in both internally displaced and refugee populations.”¹³ Although there are no

¹¹ Mooney, “The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as Category of Concern,” 15.

¹² Castles, “Toward a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation,” 18.

¹³ J. Oloka-Onyango, “The Plight of the Larger Half: Human Rights, Gender Violence and the Legal Status of Refugee and Internally Displaced Women in Africa,” *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*. 24:2, 3(1996): 349.

credible statistics on the gender ramification of the displaced within Nigeria's border, one can safely conclude that the number is a microcosm of what obtains on the global stage. Women, because of their vulnerability and sex, are easy targets of sexual and gender-based violence which are frequently perpetrated. Women are not safe due to conflicts, and on their way to fleeing conflict zones, they risk being raped or captured as sex slaves and made prostitutes by warlords. Meertens and Escobar- Segura's description of the plight of women on the violence in Colombia applies to the women in Nigeria in conflict situations:

*Those who become widows are victims thrice over: they bear the trauma caused by their husbands' death and possibly other violent acts such as rape against themselves or members of their family; they suffer the loss of means of subsistence and domestic reproduction; and they endure emotional and social dislocation from their primary world, dropped as they were in the midst of a new, unknown and often hostile urban environment.*¹⁴

It is appalling that even today in Nigeria, women still pay a heavy price in the insurgency war being fought. The age-old rule of engagement where women and children are spared in any conflict no longer exists.

The spate of killings by BH and other forms of armed conflicts has also caused a realignment of people within the country as a whole. A few decades ago, there was no question about where one chose to live, work and pray. Today many Christians have moved out of the Muslim-dominated areas of the North to settle in the South, where Christians are in the majority. In the same vein, Muslims who had lived all their life in the southern part of the country no longer feel secure and now relocating to the North, where they have their kith and kin. This demographic movement has created a huge social gap between the members of the two religions and is further becoming detrimental to children's education and proper socialisation in the future.¹⁵ In a country that has had more than its fair share of Muslim-

¹⁴ Donny Meertens and Nora Segura-Escobar, "Uprooted Lives: Gender, Violence, and Displacement in Colombia," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 17: 2(1996): 172.

¹⁵Hussaini Abdu, "Ethno-Religious Crisis in Kaduna: Impact on Women and Children." *In Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges*, edited by Etanibi

Christian tensions and conflicts, the scenario is capable of eroding the modest gains recorded in interreligious dialogue and mutual coexistence among the two major religions. These challenges have had a devastating impact on the Nigerian people, and they have also had a negative impact on the country's economy and security.

Economic Implications of Conflicts

Economic activity is what enables people to earn a living to fend for themselves, their families, and other dependents. Economic activity can only occur in an atmosphere devoid of chaos and conflict. Under such a violent climate, economic loss to human development is colossal. As Miedema states, “Investors flee unstable societies, taking key capital resources with them, while members of the population flee, taking their human capital with them. Governments overspend on security, leaving fewer resources for social services such as health care and education.”¹⁶

Forced migration in Nigeria has had rippling economic woes. Many who had migrated from the South to the North of the country are now relocating to their places of origin as the economic opportunities that had attracted them are no longer feasible in such a violent climate. Many families whose means of livelihood depended on the northern terrain's peaceful nature have had to relocate to other parts of the country. The 2011 World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, noted that the Nigerian economy had lost over six billion dollars (N1.3 trillion) as a result of attacks by Boko Haram and other insurgents.¹⁷ Social and cultural systems in many parts of the North exacerbate widows and children's harsh economic situation. These include gender disparity, customs of inheritance, traditions, and cultural beliefs hindering the right of inheritance to property left by the deceased husband. Again, those who have been forced to flee their abode have had to sell their places of business at

E. O. Alemika and Festus Okoye, (Kaduna, Nigeria: Human Rights Monitor, 2002), 139.

¹⁶Theresa Miedema E. 2010. “Violent Conflicts and Social Capital in Ethnically Polarized Development Countries,” *Ph. D Diss. The University of Toronto. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, (2010): 14.

¹⁷Eme, Okechukwu Eme I. and Jide Ibieta. “The Cost of Boko Haram.” *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* 2.2, September, 102(2013): 20.

‘give away’ prices to relocate to other places where they had neither the guarantee for their livelihood nor places to ply their trade.

With the high rate of human casualties, many families have lost the head of their household; widows have now become breadwinners of their families and children have been orphaned. Such a situation makes even their survival much more difficult considering that widows and orphans are often denied their rights and have no inheritance.¹⁸ Coupled with the social and cultural system found among some societies in Nigeria, the burden borne by these families can only be imagined.

Besides the human loss of lives and property, there is the issue of the mass exodus of “non-indigenes” who have been contributing to the economy of the areas in which they have lived for decades. This exodus has crippled economic activities in the affected states of Yobe, Kaduna, Plateau, Kano, Borno, Adamawa, and a host of others, dealing a devastating blow to the economy as people are the engine rooms that drive the economy of any nation. “In analyzing the importance of factors of production, economists are unanimous on empirical evidence that where all the factors: land, labour, capital are provided in the right proportion, the absence, or inadequacy of the latest factor of production known as entrepreneur (human capital) will render the other factors useless.”¹⁹ As they migrate to safer grounds, they take their human capital, skills, training, etc., which would have benefitted their former abode.

The healthcare industry is an area that has been severely hit by forced migration. Many patients cannot access health care due to the mass exodus of doctors to other climes. Many die before being taken to hospitals far away from their places of domicile. Statistics show that Nigeria accounts for 10 per cent of global maternal deaths. Causes of this include the high patient-doctor ratio, which stands at 1: 33,000 against the global standard of 1: 10,000, and the high poverty level. It is estimated that there are over 4000 Nigerian doctors in the United Kingdom alone, not to mention other

¹⁸Hassan Kukah, *The Church and the Politics of Social Responsibility*, (Lagos, Nigeria: Sovereign Prints, 2007), 125.

¹⁹Nicholas Ibekwe, “Boko Haram Forces 15000 Pupils out of School in Borno, Kills over 170 Teachers/Students,” Premium Times, 2013. <http://premiumtimesng.com/news/html>.

countries. Many middle-class Nigerians travel to India every year to access medical care. It is estimated that Nigerians spend over 120 billion naira annually on medical tourism. And an estimated 5,000 Nigerians travel to India monthly to treat varied ailments. In the year 2012 alone, the sum of 260 million dollars was used by these Nigerians for medical purposes.²⁰

There is no doubt as to the manpower capability within the country. Nigeria produces a sizeable number of doctors to attend to the sick. However, because the healthcare sector in Nigeria is seriously underfunded and incentives unattractive to ensure health workers stay within the country, many have chosen to migrate overseas where they remain for their entire working life. Notable destinations for these doctors and nurses include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This colossal brain drain will continue until such a time the Nigerian government does enough to discourage migration.

Apart from this international migration of health workers, internal migration also causes problems for the health status of children in Nigeria. Socioeconomic factors such as better earnings, employment, and access to modern facilities often attract rural dwellers to urban centers. Over one million children in Nigeria die annually from one of the six childhood killer diseases. Some children die because of rural-urban migration. A study on the relationship between migration and immunisation in Nigeria showed that the likelihood of full immunisation was higher for children of rural nonimmigrant mothers than children of rural-urban mothers. This is because those who migrate often risk not being immunised or settling in places already covered by health officials.²¹

Political Consequences of Forced Migration

The primary duty of government at all levels is the protection of lives and property. When armed groups operate with impunity, they often undermine the authority of the state and make it difficult for governments to provide

²⁰Gboyega Alaka, "Burden of a Nation: How Nigerians Spend Billion on Medical Tourism," *The Nation Online*, 2014. <https://thenationonlineng.net/>.

²¹Antai Diddy, "Migration and Child Immunization in Nigeria: Individual and Community-Level Contexts". *Antai BMC Public Health*,10. 116(2010): 5.

basic services and maintain law and order. This can lead to a breakdown in public trust and a rise in political instability. In states such as Niger and Kaduna, there are credible reports of vast swaths of land in the hands of non-state actors. This has become impossible for communities within the affected domains to live productive life as they cannot guarantee the protection of their lives or property.

Lack of documentation is a common characteristic among the internally displaced as documentation frequently is lost or confiscated during flight. During the 2023 General Elections, many displaced persons could not participate in the democratic processes, especially in Northern Nigeria, where banditry, farmers-headers clashes, and kidnappings remain the order of the day. Moreover, since voting rights almost invariably are tied by laws of general application to the elector's place of residence, a lack of documentation commonly results in the disenfranchisement of the internally displaced, depriving them of a say in the political, economic, and social decisions that affect their lives.²²

Additionally, Nigeria is planning to conduct a general census in the same year. Census is usually conducted to give the government adequate demographic data in allocating resources, economic planning, and redistribution of the political map. Although the 2023 census has been postponed severally because of logistics and poor funding, it would likely not be feasible for many IDPs to return to their ancestral home before the commencement of the enumeration exercise. This is a huge loss of political and economic capital to the IDPs since the exercise would have been over by the time they eventually return to their ancestral homes.

6. Results and Discussions

The study investigated the socioeconomic and political implications on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. The analysis aimed to shed light on the challenges faced by IDPs and the potential effects on their overall well-being. The study utilised qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data and analyze the findings.

²²Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as Category of Concern," 17.

The findings revealed significant socioeconomic implications for internally displaced persons in Nigeria. IDPs faced severe challenges accessing necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education. Many IDP camps were often overcrowded and lacked adequate infrastructure. This situation resulted in heightened vulnerability to diseases, malnutrition, and limited educational opportunities, particularly for children. Many individuals were forced to abandon their jobs, land, and assets, eroding their economic stability. The loss of livelihoods due to forced displacement profoundly impacted the social and economic outcomes for IDPs. The lack of income-generating opportunities within IDP camps further exacerbated their financial hardships. As a result, IDPs faced increased poverty rates and a heightened reliance on external aid.

Secondly, forced migration also had significant political implications in Nigeria. The influx of IDPs strained the existing social fabric of host communities. The sudden increase in population and competition for scarce resources often led to tensions and conflicts between IDPs and host communities. These tensions could exacerbate existing ethno-religious fault lines and potentially escalate into broader social and political instability. Additionally, there is the possibility that IDPs can overstretch the resources of their communities when they eventually return to their homestead.

Furthermore, there are also challenges to governance and the delivery of public services. Local and national governments struggled to provide adequate support and resources to meet the needs of IDPs. This inadequate response could erode public trust in the government's ability to address the needs of its citizens, potentially undermining social cohesion and political stability.

Lastly, the displacement crisis affected Nigeria's overall peace and security. In some instances, IDP camps became breeding grounds for criminal activities and radicalization. The lack of adequate security measures within camps made them vulnerable to infiltration by armed groups, exacerbating security challenges in the affected regions.

Overall, the findings of this study underscored the profound socioeconomic and political implications of forced migration for internally displaced persons in Nigeria. The study highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated responses from the government, civil

society organisations, and the international community to address the multifaceted challenges that IDPs face.

7. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight some implications of forced migration and its consequences on the family in Nigeria due to conflicts occasioned by the rise of Boko Haram, banditry, kidnappings, and other forms of violence. In such a violent climate, no country can attend to its developmental goals and objectives, including the family's good. The violence unleashed on a significant number of its population can destabilize the country. Mobility in a country like Nigeria, with a vast population of over 200 million people, occurs daily. The various forms of violence being unleashed on hapless citizens is capable of making this situation assume a frightening new dimension where it may lead to acrimony and deep-seated hatred based on religion or ethnicity.

The case must be made for IDPs displaced by violence by the Federal and State government to cater to their basic needs. It is quite appalling that the government gives people of such a category less attention. Few, if any, refugee camps or resettlement centers exist to cater to those who have lost houses or means of livelihood or who have been widowed or orphaned. Most of them have been provided for by Non-Governmental and Faith Based Organisations. In places where the state governments have set up IDP camps, adequate security is often not provided to protect these vulnerable groups. More frequently than not, armed groups make daring incursions into open IDP camps where they rape, kill, and main with reckless abandon. A case in point is the recent killings in Benue state, where scores of people were killed, and others further displaced.²³

The fate of most IDPs is not different from refugees. They have similar needs, including shelter, clothing, food, medicine, water, and other necessities of life. Despite the common need, as Mooney notes, IDPs rarely receive the same type of reintegration packages provided to refugees.²⁴ Left

²³Peter Duru, "Benue Killings: Declare a State of Emergency on Security now- Tribal Leaders to FG," *Vanguard Newspaper*, April 10, 2023
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/04/>.

²⁴Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as Category of Concern," 18.

to cater for their needs, they are not even accounted for, let alone anyone noticing their plight. The need to protect such a category of civilians cannot be overemphasized. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security calls on all members of the International Community to protect women, children, and other vulnerable groups.²⁵

The gendered ramification of migration helps us to appreciate the economic, political, and social dimensions of migration, which affects hundreds of thousands of families. Gender discussion is important if we must appreciate how men and women circulate in the different facets of the migration prospects. Not much has been done to address the peculiar needs of women and children regarding forced migration. The state and the international community must offer them all the protection they need to survive in such a climate of uncertainty that has been forced upon them by circumstances, not of their choice.

8. Recommendations

- i.** Governments at all levels must take proactive measures in ensuring the protection of lives and property of its citizens, and irrespective of their place of abode, are accorded adequate protection to forestall incessant cases of violence, banditry, and kidnappings of hapless civilians. Key to stemming the tide of forced migration is for governments to be more responsible and to rise to the challenge of governance where the rule of law is upheld.
- ii.** The Nigerian government is also responsible for addressing the issue of forced migration. This includes providing security for displaced populations, improving access to education and healthcare, and promoting economic development in areas affected by conflict. The National Assembly, as a matter of urgency, must enact enabling laws to accommodate the plight of the IDPs so as not to be disenfranchised in times of conflict and forced displacement. This will ensure that they participate in the democratic process that will affect their lives.
- iii.** Forced migration of vulnerable populations such as women and children is a development issue that should be accorded a pride place

²⁵United Nations, “[UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security.](https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2000/10/)” 2000. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2000/10/>.

in governmental programmes to cater to their social and economic welfare. Adequate safety social nets need to be provided in the annual national budget to accommodate such emergencies in the future. Governments must promote sustainable livelihoods, education, and healthcare opportunities for displaced families.

- iv.** Considering the increasing vulnerability of IDPs in any conflict situation, it is of utmost importance that the international community come together to provide for their protection by giving them the same status as refugees despite not having crossed internationally recognised boundaries.
- v.** Those found guilty of perpetrating violence against women and children must be dealt with in accordance with the provision of the law without religious or ethnic sentiments to serve as a deterrent to others.
- vi.** By working together, the international community and the Nigerian government can help to mitigate the negative social, economic, and political impacts of forced migration on families.

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