

**Humanitarian intervention in Nigeria: A Case of internally displaced  
People in Benue State, 2018 – 2021**

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**Abstract**

*The several years of crisis and insecurity across the North central states of Nigeria, particularly Benue state occasioned by Herders –Farmers crisis has resulted in humanitarian emergency, hence, the attendant consequence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Benue state. Apart from lives and property which have been lost as a result of this conflicts, most victims of this conflict have been dislocated from their homelands and are now living in Internally Displaced Persons' camps across the state. This paper therefore, examines the various humanitarian interventions in the IDP camps to ascertain the conditions of the IDPS and the effectiveness of the interventions by the government and other humanitarian organizations. This paper also assesses the challenges confronting the IDPs in the camps as well as the impact of the displacement on the Internally Displaced Persons. The paper employs both secondary and tertiary sources of data and adopted the historical research method in assembling and interrogating the data sourced for this research. The finding reveals that despite the intervention by government and other humanitarian agencies, the living conditions of the IDP are still deplorable and vulnerable. The paper recommends that the government should work to prevent situations that will lead to the displacement of the people in the first instance by bringing perpetrators to book, reintegrate the IDPs to society and then synergize with other humanitarian organizations and agencies to provide care and relief materials to the IDPs in terms of their shelter, education, food, health, clothing and security needs.*

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Intervention, Internally Displaced Persons, Insecurity, Farmers - Herders

**Introduction**

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been very challenging for the people of North central states and Benue state in particular in terms of security of lives and property. In fact, greater part of the story of the people in this era is that of violence conflicts orchestrated by people or groups pursuing conflicting



interests, be it political, religious, ethnic, elitist or even economic. As Heassly aptly observed, “one of the most significant challenges facing the citizens of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is how to live and work peacefully with others in all spheres of personal and public life”.<sup>1</sup> The above expression captures the plight of the people of Benue state who have suffered violent attacks as a result of Herder – Farmers conflicts thereby rendering them internally displaced from their original homelands leaving them at the mercy of humanitarian groups.

It is on record that since 2010 the herders have resorted to the use of arms to launch a resource-based war on the people of Benue to gain access to grazing land by force. Between 2010 and 2020 the group has ferociously attacked, maimed, killed and displaced millions of people in Benue. The devastating nature of the attacks seems to make Benue state the epic centre of the herders-farmers war in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> The most devastating of this ‘war of attrition’ took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2018, when the herders during a night raid, killed over seventy people in Guma local Government Area of the state.<sup>3</sup> Since then there has been pocket of killings linked to the herders who have often come out to claim responsibilities for the killings. These attacks lend credence to the claims by the Global Terrorism Report Index for 2015 which classified these herders as the fourth deadliest group in 2014. The report claimed that the herders killed about 80 people between 2010 and 2013 and 1,229 in 2014. Mostly these violent attacks took place in the North central states of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Kaduna.<sup>4</sup>

The attacks on the Tiv farmers by the herders often times appear to be highly coordinated and spontaneous across the state. These attacks took place in Guma, Katsina Ala, Markurdi, Logo, Agatu, Gwer West and Kwande Local Government Areas. Ikpanor and Sambe<sup>5</sup> recoded that the attacks were characterized by large-scale destruction of lives, farmlands and properties, rape, abduction and displacement of farmers; an operation which suggested a clearly orchestrated plan to evict the farmers from their ancestral homeland. One of the major fallouts of this incessant attacks and displacement of villages is the emergence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the creation of IDP camps in selected Local Government Areas in Benue State. The IDPs are part of the civil population in need of protection, assistance and humanitarian interventions. Accordingly, the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and other humanitarian agencies such as United Nations High Commission on Refugee (UNHCR), the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Organizations for Migration (IOM) etc. became active in providing care and assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons in the camps that were established in Benue state.

<sup>1</sup> A.T. Heassly. *The Beginning of War*. Britain: Authorhouse publishers, 2019, 2

<sup>2</sup> F. Wegh. *Herdsman and Farmers conflict in Nigeria: Another Dimension of Insecurity*. Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research, Vol.3, No.1, 2018, 35

<sup>3</sup> P.I Ukase and T.P.J. Jato. *From Home to Homelessness: The Dilemma of Internally Displaced Person in Benue State*. Complete Report on the Condition of IDPS in Benue State. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2020, 9

<sup>4</sup> Global Terrorism Report Index, 2015, 43 – 44

<sup>5</sup> E.T. Ikpanor and A. Sambe. ‘Herders-Farmers Conflicts and Food Security in Benue State’. Benue Valley Journal of Herders-Farmers Crisis, Vol.1 No.1 July, 2020, 129

Due to the complex nature of the crises, there has been a correspondent rise in the number of IDPS in Benue state thereby necessitating humanitarian interventions both by the government and humanitarian organizations. These problems of human suffering or crises of humanity overwhelmed the local capacity of the state to respond, hence, the need for external assistance.

It is against this background that this paper sets out to examine the various humanitarian intervention in Benue state, assess the effects of this displacement on the IDPS as well as analyze the impact of these displacement on the affected population.

### Conceptual issues

As Christopher Kastowski observes about the concept of 'revolution', "if scholars do not attach the same meaning to a concept they can at least specify which 'meaning' they mean,"<sup>6</sup> to this end this paper will specify the meaning of the following terms or concepts:

#### *Humanitarian Intervention:*

Modern humanitarian actions or interventions stems from the Age of Enlightenment when critical thinking and discourse challenged conventional boundaries regarding who and what deserved attention and care. It is in this connection that Pringle and Hunt observed that "modern humanitarianism encompasses aspects of both philanthropy and cosmopolitanism".<sup>7</sup> For the duo therefore, humanitarian action or intervention is the active provision of humanitarian aid: aid designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, restore and promote human dignity at the wake of disaster and during large scale emergencies.<sup>8</sup> A humanitarian therefore is a care giver. Used in the context of the United Nations role in peace keeping around the globe, the concept of humanitarian intervention is used to describe the situation when the United Nations Security council can allow the use of force whenever they cannot pass a resolution under chapter VII of the Charter due to veto by a permanent member or due to not achieving nine affirmative votes. For the purpose of this paper, humanitarian actions and humanitarian intervention will mean one thing and will be used interchangeably. Humanitarian Intervention as used in this paper therefore, connotes the provision of aid to save lives, alleviate suffering and cater for the socio-economic, educational, health, emotional, psychological and security well-being of the Internally displaced Persons in Benue state.

#### *Internally Displaced Persons:*

The concept of Internally Displaced Person has gained currency in the last decade due to civil conflicts, war, human right abuses or natural disaster such

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<sup>6</sup>C. M. Katowski. 'Revolution' In Sartori Giovanni (ed). Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 1984), 440

<sup>7</sup>J. Pringle and M. Hunt. Humanitarian Action. Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics. ResearchGate, Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media, 1 DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-05544-2\_235-1

<sup>8</sup>. Pringle and M. Hunt. Humanitarian Action, 2

as flood or Earthquakes. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) are person or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or place of habitual residence to avoid the effect of war or armed conflict.<sup>9</sup> Majority of these IDPS take temporal shelters in what is referred to as IDP camps. Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State refers to all those persons that have been forced to leave their homeland or places of residence as a result of incessant attacks and killing by herdsmen. In their condition of forceful relocation, the IDPS have lost control of their social economic and political life and have become refugees in their own land; but unlike refugees, IDPS are found within the boundary of their country.

#### *Conflict:*

conflict in human society is as old as creation itself. As a result, the phenomenon of conflict has been a subject of academic explication among scholars and arbitrators. Conflict has been broadly associated with tension surrounding decision on various choices, sometimes manifesting in contradiction between social forces.<sup>10</sup> Olanrewaju views conflict from two perspectives: the objectivist perspective which view conflict as a product of contradiction in the social and political structure of the society; and the subjectivist perspective which sees conflict as a result of the contradiction and incompatibility of goal in the society.<sup>11</sup>

Conflict can be grouped into intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group and intergroup conflicts. Intrapersonal conflict involves conflict that arise within an individual as a result of two or more motives or goals to be achieved within a given time. This has to do more with individual thought, values and emotions. Interpersonal conflict occurs between individuals as a result of individual differences and incompatible choices. Intra-group conflict is the type of conflict that happen between individuals within a team. The incompatibility and misunderstanding among these individuals leads to intra-group conflict. Intergroup conflict on the other hand is the type the happens among different teams within an organization. This is due to varied set of goals and different interests.<sup>12</sup>

For Galtung, factors such as ethnic identities and hatred are major drivers of violent conflict. Extending this argument further he observed that it is the incompatibility of goals between two or more parties due to different perceptions of ideals that result into tension, crises and sometimes violence among the parties, states or communities.<sup>13</sup> Joseph and Benjamin succinctly captured the concept of conflict as:

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<sup>9</sup> Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010

<sup>10</sup>E.T. Ikpanor and A. Sambe. 'Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts and Food Security, 155

<sup>11</sup> I.P. Olanrewaju. " The conceptual Analysis of Peace and Conflict". In K. Soremekun (ed.) Readings in Peace Studies and conflict Resolution, 2013, 6-14

<sup>12</sup> I.E Yusuf and F.J. Tenon. "An Assessment of Pastoralists and Farmers conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt Region and its Impact on Food Security" In VUNA Journal of History and International Relations, Vol. 4, No.1 2020, 34

<sup>13</sup> J. Galtung cited In I.P. Olanrewaju. " The conceptual Analysis of Peace and Conflict", 8

As a struggle for values or scarce resources in which two contesting groups each seeks to improve values or claims on resources over those of the other. To do so, each seeks to maintain or change the social structure in terms of his or her own interest.<sup>14</sup>

Following from the above conceptualizations, this paper views herders-farmers conflict as the conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers over access to and use of resources such as water and grazing areas.

### Overview of Humanitarian Intervention in Nigeria

Modern humanitarian acts or humanitarianism is traceable to the enlightenment age when critical thinking and discourse challenged the conventional boundaries of what deserved attention and care. The new philanthropists and humanitarians started pursuing social reforms that would make broad improvements in human welfare and began to oppose the suffering resulting from slavery, destitution, inhuman forms of punishment and incarceration and cruelty to animals. It was this concern that gave rise to cosmopolitanism which questioned the moral significance of boundaries between nations and state and challenged the geographic limits of what was deserving attention and care and expanded the care to others in distant land.<sup>15</sup> The cosmopolitan nature of modern humanitarianism makes it possible to relay images of suffering across the world through the use of technology.

Modern humanitarianism has evolved over time and has adapted to new form of suffering. Accordingly, Barnett<sup>16</sup> has identified three ages of humanitarianism: imperial humanitarianism from 1800 – 1945, neo humanitarianism from 1945 – 1989, and liberal humanitarianism from 1989 – present. The current liberal humanitarian action or intervention is marked by globalization and international responses to diverse form of crises and disasters. It is within the current liberal humanitarian actions or interventions that contemporary involvement of both local and international humanitarian organizations in providing aid and care for people affected by violent conflicts in Nigeria makes sense.

Nigeria like any other part of the globalized world has also benefited from the interventions of so many humanitarian agencies, civil societies and humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), The International Committee the Red Cross (ICRC), Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) just to mention few. Nigeria started the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a lot of humanitarian crises and emergencies as a result of insecurity and violent conflict witnessed across the Northeast and North central states of Nigeria. The terrorist activities of the Boko Haram sect

<sup>14</sup> F. Joseph and T.T. Benjamin. The Socio-economic Effects of Conflict between Tiv Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen in Benue State; In M.E George-Genyi (Ed). The National Question and Development in Nigeria. (Vol.2) (Abuja: Donafrique publishers, 2016), 30

<sup>15</sup>J. Pringle and M. Hunt. Humanitarian Action. Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics. ResearchGate, Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media, 2

<sup>16</sup>M. Barnett. Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, 10

whose major ideological aim was to enthrone a theocratic government founded on the principle of sharia laws in the northern part of the country left a lot of destructions in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states with few of the attacks perpetrated in some state such as Kano and the Federal capital Territory. In fact, over forty Local Government Areas spread across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states were sacked by Boko Haram, forcing the inhabitants to seek refuge in Internally Displaced persons camps created by the Government. Borno state which has the highest number of IDP camps established majority of the camps around Maiduguri the state capital because of the high level of insecurity. The creation and sustenance of IDP camps was made possible with the assistance of humanitarian organizations (The Red Cross, UNHCF, Medecins Sans Frontieres, United Nations Population Fund etc.) which take care of the shelter, feeding, health and sometimes, education needs of the IDPs.

As Isaac noted, One of the contemporary challenges confronting the Nigerian state in general and Benue state in particular is how to provide succor to the IDPs occasioned by incessant violent attacks by herdsmen or insurgent in the North central states.<sup>17</sup> Given the insecurity and perennial violent conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers cross the North central states, especially Benue state since 2008, a lot of communities have been forcefully removed from their homelands and are now taking temporal shelter in IDP camps. The Medecins Sans Frontieres project coordinator, Simona Onidi explained that the organization started working in Benue state in 2018 because of the needs of thousands of people who were displaced from their homes in January 2018 as result of the violent attacks by herdsmen. Many of these people have lost family members and all they owned and are too scared to return to their villages.<sup>18</sup> Other Non-governmental organizations have come to the assistance of the IDPs since these camps were established. Notable among these are the International Development Agency (IDAs), Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and several charity organizations.

Apart from the state and Federal government whose duty is to protect the lives and property of its citizens during crises, the non-state and other non-governmental bodies have always provided succor to people ravaged by conflicts and other forms of armed attacks resulting in their relocation from original place of residence.

### **Humanitarian Intervention for the Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State**

The people who have been displaced as a result of political, religious, ethnic or resource-based conflicts are part of the broader population that needs the protection, assistance and care by both government and other humanitarian bodies. The first response of any responsive and responsible government, be it federal or state to the situation of human displacement as a result of conflict or natural disaster is to provide shelter and security to displaced people. It was in

<sup>17</sup>A.I. Isaac. Challenges of IDPS in Benue State: A Critical Review of Abuse, Livelihood and Response. Benue Valley Journal of Herders-Farmers Crises, Vol.3, No.1 July, 2021, 79-92

<sup>18</sup>Simona Onidi. Coordinator, Medecins Sans Frontieres. 2019 Retrieved from [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) on 20/10/2021

view of this that the government of Benue state through the State Emergency Management Agency responded first by providing camps to the IDPs. The State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) officials disclosed that the explosive number of IDPs in Benue state necessitated the establishment of more camps to provide them with make-shift shelter. The unexpectedness of the displacement forced SEMA to establish some camps in public place like schools. Some of these camps are located in Anyiin, Ugba, Gbajimba, Dauda I and Dauda II and Abagena in Makurdi, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas. The record made available by Medecins Sans Frontieres indicated that the exact number of displaced people across the state is not known. Most persons are living outside the official camps for the IDPs. SEME officials corroborated this claim by MSF asserting that unofficial camps totaling about 22 were also self-created by IDPs in Makurdi, Agatu, Guma, Gwer-West, Kwande, Ugba, Okpokwu and Logo L.G.As. These unofficial camps put together provided homes for over 409,814 displaced persons as shown in table 1 below. SEMA also provided some facilities in these camps for habitation such as toilets, boreholes and temporary clinics within the limit of available resources. To make the camps more habitable, the IDPs are being given some non-food and food items. The non-food items include: mattresses, blankets, matts, mosquito nets, cloths and slippers. Others include cooking utensils such as stove, pots, plates and buckets. The Agency has also continued to provide some basic food items to households in camps. These food items include yam, rice, milk, noodles, guinea-corn, eggs and beverages and garri.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the state government through SEMA has continued to provide health care facilities, water and sanitation and other educational support services to children.

The Federal government and several state governments have come to assist the Benue state government since the IDP camps were established. International humanitarian organizations have also intervened to bring succor to the plights of the IDPs in Benue. In the area of shelter, International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been providing some assistance. The Red Cross has provided food stuffs to the IDPs in the camps. In the area of health care, MSF, United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have all provided assistance. For instance, MSF provided and still provides primary health care in four camps for free to around 8,000 displaced people as well as people from the surrounding communities. The most common disease treated in the camps is malaria which increases further during the rainy season. Other illnesses include acute watery diarrhea and skin infections such as scabies caused by poor sleeping environment in the camps.<sup>20</sup> The UNFPA oversee the protection and livelihood of the IDPs in some camps and health care services in others depending on the needs and gaps identified. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) on the other hand provides water and sanitation as well as cater for the educational needs of the children in the camps. Available records indicate that SEMA and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have often undertaken the task of managing and coordinating the camps in terms of

<sup>19</sup> State Emergency Management Agency 2019.

<sup>20</sup>Simona Onidi. Coordinator, Medecins Sans Frontieres.



registering IDPs and proving shelters. The summary of the intervention by International partners is presented in table 3 below.<sup>21</sup>

However, inadequate government support due to paucity of fund and the unwillingness on the part of some international organizations (some citing safety and security concerns) to intervene in the IDP crises in Benue State has led to increased vulnerability among the IDPs in both the official and unofficial camps scattered across the state. Research conducted by Ukase and Jato<sup>22</sup> shows that though there have been supports from both the state and Federal governments, humanitarian aid and assistance from donor agencies and other public-spirited bodies; more urgent interventions are needed in the areas of shelter, food, education, health, clothing and access to employment for the vulnerable IDP family across Benue state so as to address the growing humanitarian crises faced by displaced person in the state. The duo believe that the conditions of lack have both short and long term negative effects on both the IDPs and the future generation in Benue state.

**Table 1.** Unofficial IDP Camps in Benue State

Serial No	Name of Camp/Community	No of IDPS camp
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 Ochon	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
	<b>Total</b>	<b>409,814</b>

**Source:** Adopted from Benue State Emergency Management Agency, 2021 and modified by the author.

<sup>21</sup>State Emergency Management Agency 2019

<sup>22</sup>P.I Ukase and T.P.J. Jato. From Home to Homelessness, 61



**Table 2** Showing official IDP Camps in Benue State in 2021

S/N	Names of Camp	Local Government Area	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
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>63,333</b>

**Source:** Modified from Benue State Emergency Management Agency, 2021

**Table 3** indicating areas of Intervention by International partners in Benue IDP Camps

Serial No	Area of intervention	International partner	Camp of Intervention
1	Health	Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)  UNFPA  ICRC	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I Daudu II, Gbajimba and Abagena  Makurdi, Guma and Logo LGAs  Daudu and Gbajimba
2	Water and Sanitation	UNICEF  MSF	Gbajimba, Daudu I and II, Abagena  Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II
3	Shelter	International Organization on Migration (IOM)	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena
4	Food Items	ICRC	Daudu I and II and Abagena
5	Protection/livelihood	UNFPA  UNHCR	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena  Daudu I and II
6	Education	UNICEF	Abagena, Daudu I and II and Gbajimba
7	Camp management and coordination	SEMA/IOM	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena
8	Security	Police, NSCDC and Vigilante	Anyiin, Ugba, Daudu I and II, Gbajimba and Abagena

**Source:** Adopted from Benue State Emergency Management Agency, 2021

**The Challenges faced by the IDPs in Benue State**

The challenges confronting the Internally Displaced Persons in their various camps in Benue State are numerous. The Global Protection Cluster Working Group (2010) summarized the challenges faced by IDPs when it stated that:

Forced from their homes, IDPs also experience specific forms of deprivation, such as loss of shelter and often face heightened tension or particular protection risks. These risks may include: armed attacks and abuse while fleeing in search of safety; family separation, including an increase in the number of separated and unaccompanied children; heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly affecting women and children; arbitrary deprivation of land, homes and other properties; and displacement into inhospitable environments, where they suffer stigma and marginalization, discrimination or harassment.<sup>23</sup>

Expectedly, accommodation and shelter appear to be the most commonly faced challenge by all IDPs in Benue state by virtue of the fact that every IDP has been displaced from his or her place of habitation. Study by Ukase and Jato further showed that 100 percent of the people interviewed in IDP camps across Benue said accommodation is their number one challenge.<sup>24</sup>

Another major challenge confronting IDPs in Benue state is food scarcity. Study shows that not only is the available food rationed in the camps, the quality of the food provided is poor. For instance, the quality of food provided sometimes lacks basic ingredients and nutrients, thereby leading to malnutrition, illness and in some cases death. Inadequate clothing is another problem identified among IDPs in Benue state. Clothing is a basic human need, therefore the lack of it poses both health and human dignity challenges.

The exposure of the IDPs to inclement weather, their lack of access to adequate food supply and proper clothing often combine to pose greater challenge, which is health challenge. The most common illness in the camps are malaria, typhoid, diarrhea and skin infections. The hygiene and health care standard among the IDPs are low. The inadequacy of health knowledge and hygiene issues is compounded by limited availability of health care facilities and nonchalant attitude of health care providers. Children in IDP camps are most times not immunized and the women do not have access to toiletries during menstruations. According to Ukase and Jato, this problem is further compounded by their inability to visit a gynecologist for regular check-up during pregnancy and child birth.<sup>25</sup> Medical facilities and supplies are inadequate, not matching the health needs of the IDPs. In the case of treatment of illness or injuries, there are health care units and clinics provided by some agencies and humanitarian organizations but there are inadequate in terms of capacity, thus, the spate of referral cases to hospitals outside the camps at the expense of the IDPs are high. As a result, majority of serious illness go untreated

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<sup>23</sup> Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010

<sup>24</sup> P.I Ukase and T.P.J. Jato. From Home to Homelessness, 37

<sup>25</sup> P.I Ukase and T.P.J. Jato,

even when diagnosed. Faced with these difficulties, most IDPs resort to herbal or traditional medication to treat themselves.

The education of IDPs in Benue state has suffered serious set back due to the fact that they were forced to flee from their original place of abode. Contrary to the United Nations Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement which is to the effect that the authorities concerned shall ensure that such persons, 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.<sup>26</sup> Where schools are found at all, there are adult schools meant for adults. Hence, those in school above primary level face even greater danger of dropping out of school.

The dislocation of the IDPs from their homeland means their eventual removal from their means of livelihood. It should be noted that the Majority of the IDPs are farmers who were forced to flee from their home due to violent attacks by herdsmen leaving their farmsteads behind. In their 'new homes', they do have access to land neither do they have other farm inputs to engage in productive farming. This inactivity has rendered the IDPs unemployed and worsen the poverty level among the IDPs. This particular problem is so acute because almost 100 percent of the IDPs are unemployed.

### **The Impact of the Displacement on the IDPS**

The dislocation of the people due to the intermittent violent conflict occasioned by the herdsmen attack in Benue state has some gruesome impact on the Internally Displaced Persons. Some of these impacts include the following:

#### **Homelessness**

The forceful ejection of the people from their home due to the violent conflict has rendered the IDPs homeless and helpless. The poor condition of housing in the camps keeps reminding the IDPs of the need to return home and they have frequently expressed this displeasure by asking the relevant authorities to fast track their return to their homes. Such displeasure was expressed by the IDPs in Daudu camps in June 2021 when they blocked the Lafia – Markurdi expressway in protest against the deplorable condition of their camp.

#### **Malnutrition/Starvation**

Another impact of the displacement on the IDPs is malnutrition and starvation. In most of the camps across Benue state, foods are rationed because of limited availability. Even the available food sometimes lacks the necessary nutrients thereby leading to malnutrition especially in children. Consequently, babies and nursing mothers often fall sick in the camps and treated for nutrition related illnesses.

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<sup>26</sup>United Nations Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement. Principle 23, paragraph 2.

**Poverty**

The lack of access to employment and inadequate sources of income has further compounded worsening poverty level of the IDPs. Ukase and Jato noted that this scenario creates the likelihood of poverty trap; a situation where the state of poverty may tend to persist due to self-reinforcing mechanism, known as vicious cycle of poverty.<sup>27</sup> This is because of the negative feed-back that exist between poverty and a number of circumstances such as undernourishment lack of access to insurance, population growth, poor health and degraded environment that cause poverty.

**High Crime Rate**

There has been an increase in crime rate among the IDPs due to the poor living conditions. Many of the IDPs have resorted to crime as a means of making a living. Crimes such as armed robbery, theft, thuggery etc. is common amongst the IDPs.

**Sexual Abuse and Violation of the Women and Girl-Child**

The vulnerability of the IDPs puts them at the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and sometimes violence. Internally displaced women living in insecure shelters are at higher risk of sexual violence. They may be attack when they leave camps to fetch water or firewood.<sup>28</sup> The girl-child suffer cases of rape, child pregnancy, abortion, sex working or early marriage. The impact of this can only help to make the existential future of the girl-child bleak.

**Child Labour**

The social condition of the IDPs following their dislocation from home and the subsequent alienation from their primary occupation – usually farming has further worsened their economic woes. It is in the bid to provide for the needs of the family that the children in the IDP camps are forced to work. These children not only work to feed themselves, they also work to support the family upkeep. Most of these children below the age of eighteen often move outside the camps to engage in farming activities, petty trading and running errands for member of the host communities for meagre wages or sometimes exchange their labour for food. These poses both safety and security concerns as the children are further exposed to sexual abuses and molestations.

**The Way Forward**

Sequel to the problematics interrogated in this paper, the governments both at the state and federal level should empower the security agencies to nip in the bud all situations that may degenerate into violent conflict resulting into any form of displacement of people and humanitarian crises. The Federal

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<sup>27</sup>

<sup>28</sup>A.I. Isaac. Challenges of IDPS in Benue State: A Critical Review of Abuse, Livelihood and Response, 85

government should show political will in finding out the root causes of herders-farmers conflict in Benue state and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The government of Benue state should synergize with international agencies, humanitarian organizations, donor agencies, faith-based organizations and civil societies to coordinate relief efforts and humanitarian intervention in the IDP camps. With this synergy, education and health care will be made available to the IDPs in the right quality and at no cost to the IDPs up to secondary school level. To solve the problem of food scarcity in the camps, the government should make more funds available and monitor the exercise to ensure the equitable distribution of the food items donated. Apart from the food handout, the IDPs should be encouraged to farm in their neighborhood to supplement their nutrition needs. This can be done by supplying seedling and other farm inputs to the IDPs. To reduce unemployment amongst the IDPs, the state government should engage the active population of the IDPs in direct labour of the ministry of works on temporal basis. The humanitarian organizations should also empower the IDPs in area of skill acquisition and learning of trade to empower the IDPs and prepare them for life after their stay in the camps. Finally, there should be a deliberate and sustainable plan by the government aimed at rehabilitating and re-integrating the IDPs back into the society

### Conclusion

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a trying and challenging one for Nigeria and Nigerians in terms of security of lives and properties. The North central states of Nigeria and Benue state in particular has witnessed a recurrent violent conflict between Fulani herdsman and Tiv farmers resulting in large-scale dislocation of the people and the establishment of Internally Displaced Persons' camps across Benue state. The establishment of IDP camps in Benue state has attracted the attentions of donor agencies, international bodies, NGOs etc. that provide humanitarian interventions in the areas of shelter, feeding, education and health care delivery.

This paper concludes that In spite of these interventions, the IDPs still face the challenges of inadequate food supply, poor health care facilities, unemployment and lack of clothing. The impact of their displacement has manifested in homelessness, gender-based abuses, economic vulnerability etc. Therefore, Government at both the state and federal level, in conjunction with the humanitarian and international bodies should work together to alleviate the plight of the IDPs in Benue state.

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