



# Capacity Building for Internally Displaced Persons in Northern Nigeria: An Indispensable Step towards Economic Rehabilitation and Empowerment.

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**Abstract:** Possession of economic power is a requisite for meaningful and worthwhile life by all and sundry. Hence, to liberate Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the shackle of penury and perpetual dependent life which aggressive fellow human being and disaster had plunged them into, there is the need for economic rehabilitation and empowerment. Thus, this paper vividly examines capacity building for IDPs; it explicates the concepts of IDPs and capacity building before attempting to highlight the unspeakable challenges and suffering bedeviling IDPs in their various camps. The paper further treats in detail the various strategies for empowering the IDPs with a view to prepare them for resettlement, equip them with means of livelihood and make them productive members of the society. Aside the succinct conclusion, specific and result oriented recommendations were proffered which include the need for government to curtail the root causes of violence and at the same time rise to the challenge of providing security and maintaining peace in the nation.

**Keywords:** Capacity Building, Empowerment, Violence, Internally Displaced Persons

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## Introduction

Right from the onset of the fourth republic in 1999, Nigeria has been besotted and plagued with series of violence, including political, religious, communal, ethnic, to mention but a few. Each of these violent activities is never without its attendant toll and throe on the psyche of an average citizen and Nigeria as a whole. In the list of violence suffered and witnessed by Nigerian, the Boko Haram insurgency ranked higher and its debilitating impact cannot be easily eradicated in the annals and chronicle of Nigeria. This is because, apart from sending countless number of people into untimely grave, pauperized a lot of well to do individuals, it has escalated the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria. Besides, Boko Haram insurgency has rendered many untold surviving victims homeless and displaced.

According to Lenshie (2016) the insurgency carried out by the sect in the Northeast accounts for over 90 percent of the IDPs, with less than 10 percent caused by natural disasters in Nigeria. Similarly, Zamudio (2014) notes that the unprecedented rise in IDPs in Nigeria was due to Boko

Haram attacks, heavy-handed counter insurgency operations, and ongoing inter-communal violence. Besides, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA (2014) reports that reprisal attacks on communities accused of sheltering Boko Haram insurgents by the Nigerian armed forces have also added to the number of displaced people in the northeast.

Further, the undue carnage and murderous activities of Fulani herdsmen, ethnic violence, tribal conflicts coupled with ecological and natural disaster also contributed immensely to the rising statistic in no small measure. Little wonder in the recent, issues of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have attracted not only local concern but international attention. According to Baffour (2015) Nigeria has 3.3 million persons displaced by conflict – the highest number in Africa. On a global scale, Nigeria is only ranked behind Syria with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs. Without mincing words, many people had been displaced and still being displaced by the nefarious activities

and menace of the insurgent, conflicts and ecological catastrophe. Factually, all the states in the Northern Nigeria, especially, North Eastern states have one internally displaced persons camp or the other.

Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC (2006) reported that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) tend to suffer and witnessed horrible and terrible experiences, not only from the hands of their pursuers, but also within and outside the camp where they resorted to seek refuge. Importantly, the displacement suffered manifested in many folds, that is, apart from displacement psychologically, they suffered displacement from their loved ones – families, displacement from their sheltering homes, displacement from their neighbours, displacement from their place of work/business, displacement from their community and even at times, displacement from their states. All these bring unspeakable hardship and horror to these set of people. Unarguably, no matter the facilities provided at the IDPs camp, it can never be equated with hitherto homes of these victims in terms of comfort and satisfaction.

### **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): A Conceptual Elucidation:**

According to Wikipedia (2017) an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. In the perception of Odunmorayo (2015), IDPs are people who have fled their homes because of conflict and persecution based on religion, race, nationality, membership of a social group or political opinion but remain within their home country's borders. A detailed and comprehensive definition was given in the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement (1998) as "persons or groups 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 in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border."

Moreover in the view of Vincent (2000) a recent study has recommended that the IDPs concept should be defined even

Odunmorayo (2015) observes that IDPs are among the most vulnerable set of people who the government needs to cater for while ensuring that they are secure and of sound health. But unfortunately, experiences and reports from the camps confirmed the harsh and austere nature of the place. The IDPs suffered and experienced indescribable economic hardship which manifested in hunger, thirst, cold, maltreatment and even abuse from the caregivers. Since it is practically impossible to continue to sojourn perpetually in the camp, there is urgent need not only for rehabilitation but also for economic empowerment in order to give a new lease of life to IDPs. This is essential for speedy adjustment, restoration and integration into local social services and allowing them access to jobs, education, health care opportunities and to be able to contribute meaningfully to the development of their immediate community and Nigeria at large. Thus this paper vividly examined the imperativeness of capacity building for IDPs with a view to unravel various ways of rehabilitating and empowering them economically so as to be able live worthwhile and fulfilling lives when the siege is over.

more narrowly, to be limited to persons displaced by violence. Thus, every individual displaced by any form of violence, political, religious, ethnic, inter tribal, et cetera constitute internally displaced persons. According to Ladan (2006), "the internally displaced persons are a category displaced within a geographical location. Because of the displacement, they suffer several consequences as the means of their livelihood, such as agriculture and trade are dashed out as a result of violent conflicts or disaster, which could be as a result of a consequence of human or natural factor." Thus, in Nigeria, there are many states especially in the north eastern part that had been ravaged and plundered by violence and insurgency.

On the other hand, capacity building as defined by Wikipedia (2017) is "the process by which individual and organizations obtain, improve, and retain the skills and knowledge needed to do their jobs competently." Capacity building and capacity

development are often used interchangeably; however, some people interpret capacity building as not recognizing people's existing capacity whereas capacity development recognizes existing capacities which require improvement. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Management (UNISDR (2016) defined capacity development as "the process by which people, organizations and society systematically stimulate and develop their capability over time to achieve social and economic goals, including through improvement of knowledge, skills, systems, and institutions – within a wider social and cultural enabling environment."

United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (UNCEPA (2006) posits that community capacity-building on an individual level requires the development of conditions that allow individual participants to build and enhance knowledge and skills. It also calls for the establishment of conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the "process of learning and adapting to change". Community capacity building often refers to strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and

communities in developing societies so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering. Danesy (2007) perceives capacity building as a process of harnessing human and material resources, the talents and innate potential abilities of an individual for the purpose of assisting his or her ability for productive, creative and innovative services.

Internally Displaced Persons possess great talents, resources and abilities that can be developed and engaged in productive services. It is opined that if they are given the right type of education, training and skills, they can function virtually in all the fields of human endeavour. Besides, as bona fide citizens of Nigeria, Agwa and Nwazuo (2013) submits that they should be encouraged to contribute their quota to national development, be productive partners in order to rescue the nation from unemployment and the prevailing economic recession. Hence, it behoves the government of the states where the IDPs reside to take primary responsibility for their assistance, rehabilitation and empowerment.

## **Conditions and Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons**

According to Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons (1998), arbitrary displacement in the first instance is prohibited (Principles 5-7). Once persons have been displaced, they retain a broad range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including the right to basic humanitarian assistance (such as food, medicine, shelter), the right to be protected from physical violence, the right to education, freedom of movement and residence, political rights such as the right to participate in public affairs and the right to participate in economic activities (Principles 10-23). These principles were not dully followed and implemented in Nigeria as internally displaced persons battle with myriad of unpalatable and unspeakable challenges.

International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC (2007) was quick to recognize that IDPs were "deprived of shelter and their habitual sources of food, water, medicine and money, they have different, and often more urgent, material needs.

According to Odunmorayo (2015) perhaps more alarming than the number of IDPs are the poor conditions under which most of the IDPs are living. A large majority of Nigeria's over 1.5 million displaced persons are housed in overcrowded camps across the disturbed northern regions.

Similarly, Akinbote (2016) while commenting on the state of IDPs camp remarked that having over 2, 000, 000 people in IDP Camp is saddening, having an insight into what happens within the borders of such camps is horrible. Besides, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR (2007) observes that displaced persons suffer, significantly, higher rates of mortality than the general population. They also remain at high risk of physical attack, sexual assault and abduction, and frequently are deprived of adequate shelter, food and health services. Critically reviewing the deplorable and pathetic conditions of internally displaced persons in their various camps, the followings are evident:

- a. Idleness, impoverishment and hunger due to loss of job, destruction of business, farm land and other place of work;
- b. Increase in the number of orphans, half orphans, widows and widowers;
- c. Multiplication of incidence, cases and people with disabilities;
- d. Death, disappearances, displacement and death;
- e. Panic, fear, worry and feeling of insecurity.

Specifically, prominent in the list of horrible challenges faced and experienced by internally displaced victims include:

- a. Negligent and sparing support from the government. The federal government in particular has been accused of paying lip service and non challant attitude to needs and suffering of internally displaced people in the respective states. The private individuals, voluntary groups and association as well as international organizations have been more responsive to the yearnings and crying of IDPs
- b. Deprivation, inadequate supply and limited access to basic necessities of life in terms of food, clothing and shelter. As a result, many of them suffer untold hunger and starvation, unbearable hash and cold weather. Many children in the camp are suffering from malnourishment which in turn makes them feeble, fragile, fainting and susceptible to disease attack.
- c. Sexual abuse, assault and indiscriminate sexual perversion. Camp officials, soldiers, policemen, vigilante groups and other care givers attached to the IDPs often exploit their helpless state sexually.

### **Strategies for economic rehabilitation and empowerment of internally displaced persons:**

Lenshie (2016) observes that despite the effort by the government and the international donor agencies toward supporting the IDPs, it is evident that there is a humanitarian deficit as many of these people live under poor humanitarian conditions in and out of the camps. Hence, there is urgent need for rehabilitation and economic empowerment. Prior to

It even manifested within and between co-IDPs. Catalogues of teenagers have been harassed and defiled, resulting into uncontrolled pregnancies and multiplication of unwanted babies in the camps.

- d. Invalidity and failing health, resulting from poor environment, over crowding, congestion and absence of good medical facilities. Some sustained serious injuries without proper treatment while escaping from the enemies; others have developed emotional and psychological problems, increased blood pressure, hypertension and many other infectious diseases without proper management. Besides, many have been forced to join the cluster of persons with disabilities.
- e. Fear, worry and uncertainty about their safety, displaced families and even their means of livelihood. The fear becomes deepen on realization that their houses, resources, wealth, business and/ or farmland had been destroyed or burnt by their assailants. The pathetic, sombering and unanswered rhetoric questions are: what is the next line of action and where to start from? In addition, there is fear of uncertainty about the security of IDPs camps as many of the camps are not totally free from invasion and attack.

All these challenges, including others not specified call for urgent intervention and as Odunmorayo (2015) rightly observed, IDPs are among the most vulnerable set of people who the government needs to cater for while ensuring that they are secure and of sound health. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to stress that the effects of these challenges are more prominent and conspicuous among children and teenagers.

their return and resettlement back home, internally displaced persons can be empowered through education, acquisition of basic skills, reorientation of values and productive culture and active political participation. A lot of activities can be designed and put in place in order to build, develop and empower them. These include:

Counselling services: Counselling according to Ipaye in Nwazuoke (1998) is concerned with creating opportunities and suitable environment for the personal, social, educational and vocational growth of the individual. According to Nwazuoke, counselling benefits the client in the sense that it helps him to improve his well-being. Many internally displaced persons have suffered emotional trauma, depression and even hallucination. There is need for timely and appropriate counselling to soothe their feelings, reassure them of their safety and renew hope of better tomorrow in them.

Special education: According to Agwa and Nwazuoke (2013), special education is designed to ensure that people with disabilities are provided an environment that allows them to be educated effectively. It provides opportunities to assess and determine the strength and weakness of every individual with disabilities. Besides, placement, resources and goals are determined on the basis of the student's needs. Internally displaced persons can be developed and benefit maximally from special education. Precisely, those that have suffered serious injuries, amputation or loss of specific physical part of their bodies (physical disabilities). This becomes imperative as it is generally believed that education/knowledge is power, capable of liberating from abysmal ignorance.

Entrepreneurship education: Onifade (2004) defines entrepreneurship as the act of floating, investing and managing a business for self employment and with profit motive. According to Ajewole (2012) entrepreneurship education can be described as any comprehensive planned effort undertaken by individuals and/or institutions/agencies to develop competence in people that are intended to lead to self-employment generation and/or short term training.

According to him, entrepreneurship skills include:

- a. Development of enterprise, small scale business development, capacity to initiate and start ones own business;

## **Conclusion**

In order to foster full restoration, resettlement, active involvement, participation, contribution and to ensure continuous and sustained relevance of internally displaced persons in Nigeria, capacity building must not only be seen

- b. Development of an entrepreneurial spirit, characteristics and personality;
- c. Development of technical, technological and other professional competence needed for productive work and employment;
- d. Development of managerial capabilities to run the business or other self employment successfully. Persons with disabilities can benefit tremendously from entrepreneurship education especially in the face of Nigerian economic environment that is bedeviled with acute unemployment syndrome. With little capital, encouragement, incentive from the government, well meaning individuals, good number of internally displaced persons within a short time can become entrepreneurs.

Vocational training: Akintayo (2001) defines vocational training as any productive manual skills training organised for the purpose of preparing and integrating adults for self employment. It is assumed that the skills acquired could lead an individual beneficiary to earn a living or to be self reliant without opting for white collar job. Carpentry, bricklaying, fashion design, vulcanising, mechanics, soap making, tie and dye, hair dressing, barbing, dry cleaning, painting, piggery, poultry keeping and a lot of others are vocations internally displaced persons can be exposed into before leaving the camp and any of them is capable transforming or changing the fortune of the practitioner for better. Since government job seems to be elusive in the recent, vocational training and jobs serve as last resort and hope of the people.

Resettlement financially through the provision of monetary assistance especially for the IDPs that are formerly artisans, traders or business men and women. This would definitely provide much relief and encouragement for the beneficiary among the IDPs.

as indispensable but also as a continuous exercise. This would enable these people to acquire the needed skills, spur them into the world of works and make them parts of the productive members of the society. Besides, the

responsibility of developing and empowering internally displaced persons is a collective responsibility; hence, government at all levels, international organizations, private individuals, corporate organizations as well as philanthropists need to rise to the challenge by creating conducive atmosphere and be prepared not only to assist but also to invest on these category of people.

## Recommendations

In order to checkmate the spate of displacement in Nigeria, certain pragmatic measures must be devised; these include the need to urgently identify and address the immediate and remote causes of violence, conflict, clashes, ecological and natural disaster in the country. Since internal displacement is an offshoot of one religious, political or ethnic violence or the other, it is imperative for the government to intervene and wade into action by tracing and tackling the causes of such violence once for all. Where there are insurgence of ethnic militia like Niger Delta militant boys, Boko haram, et cetera, holistic approach must be employed by the government by critically considering the reason for their agitation and grievances and proffer appropriate solution to it. Besides, since it is the responsibility of the government to maintain peace and security, government must not relax nor spare any efforts in attempt to provide and maintain peace throughout the nook and crany of the nation. The security agents must be adequately equipped, empowered, strengthened and allow to carry out their duties freely without any fear and interruption. Importantly, the security of the camps must be seriously ensured and the safety of the residence guaranteed. The menace of sexual assault, abuse, harassment and perversion within the camps which often manifested in undue exploitation of ladies and young girls by

the camp official and security officers must be checkmated. Human dignity must be respected and held in high esteem. The federal government has been failing and negligent in her responsibility towards the upkeep of internally displaced persons in Nigeria. This is evident in the deplorable state of the camps, starvation and absence of basic health facilities. The government needs to rise to the challenge by making the IDPs camps conducive and comfortable through adequate provision of financial grant, adequate food supply, good health facilities and other relevant conveniences. Before now, the efforts and assistance of internal organizations (like USAID, UNICEF, UNDP, ECOWAS, etc), non governmental organizations, private individuals and voluntary organizations have been very commendable in terms of provision of humanitarian aid, donations and support. Notwithstanding, more humanitarian assistance is still coveted and solicited from them in order to make live in the camp comfortable for the IDPs.

Finally, there is need for sustained peace and as such, its pursuit, promotion and preservation in every community and Nigeria as a whole is a collective responsibility. Both educated and illiterate, young and old, the rich and the poor, citizens and aliens must rise to the task of preaching peace, tolerance, cooperation, acceptance, togetherness and unity in Nigeria. All the religious leaders must be highly involved in this regard. This is germane to eradicating every root of clamour, confrontation, conflict, violence and the menace threatening the livelihood of people in Nigeria. While government and other concern agencies are not relenting in their efforts to accord the welfare and betterment of the IDPs the utmost attention it deserves, all effort must also be made to quell all existing conflict and insurgence, and to device appropriate mechanism to prevent future outbreak of violence in any part of the country.

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