

Review Article

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Nigeria in the Valley of Recession: A call for national repentance as a Panacea for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Economic Development

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Abstract

The study investigates the impact of national repentance for achieving internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Economic Development. National repentance has no doubt the potential to increase the socio-economic development of displaced persons in Nigeria. Internal displacement is not a new phenomenon. This study proposes that the protracted displacement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) poses a significant risk to human development in the country. The causes and effects of protracted displacement and non repentance on capability as an indicator of human development were examined. Over a million Nigerians are displaced and live in IDP camps in their own country. There is therefore an urgent need to break protocols in recognizing and caring for victims of deadly attacks in Northern and other parts of Nigeria. These bureaucratic hindrances are irrelevant for a compassionate government. All barricades against displaced persons must be lifted; government and its agencies should scout for displaced persons from settlement to settlement and bring them comfort, particularly in crisis-ridden areas of the country. Corruption and government irresponsibility should not infiltrate the IDP camps. The study concludes that National repentance has every sign of improving the socio-economic wellbeing of the displaced in the country both in short and long run. When people repent of corruption and other criminal act against humanity as such basic amenities and other facilities will become more available. The study therefore recommends that Practical efforts should be made by Private sector and the Nigerian government through agencies like National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in building more internally displaced person's (IDPs) camps that are more conducive in terms of availability of proper water, sanitation, hygiene, (WASH).

Keywords

*National repentance,
Internally Displaced
Persons (IDPs),
Economic
Development*

Introduction

Available statistics show day after day that Nigeria is a Nation undergoing the most unnecessary horrible kind of Leadership in the world. This is in light of her endowments in human resources, natural resources, not to talk of economic and political advantages in Africa and the world. Ukeje (2002) conceded that Nigeria is generously endowed with abundant natural resources.

In the midst of its reserves of human and natural resources, Ukeje (2002) therefore concluded that Nigeria has the potential to build a prosperous economy and provide for the basic needs of her population. According to the Nigerian National planning Commission (2004) Nigeria's rich human and material resource endowments give it the potential to become Africa's largest economy and a major player in the global economy.

Consequent upon the above therefore, Nigerians are forced to wallow in abject poverty, sorrow, shame, disease, pain and violence which lead to IDPs. At the moment Nigeria is in the deep valley of economic recession, corruption, dramatically increased number of internally displaced people (IDPs) and insecurity. Youth unemployment is ever on the increase, the vice of women and child trafficking, extra judicial killings and kidnapping have become notorious.

The growing level of violent attacks in Nigeria has unavoidably led to the increase in the number of displaced persons in Nigeria. Due to the siege laid by extremist in Northern Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen/Farmers clashes in almost all the parts of the country, ethnic clashes, cult rivalry. Over a million Nigerians are displaced and live in IDP camps in their own country. There is therefore an urgent need to break protocols in recognising and caring for victims of deadly attacks in Northern and other parts of Nigeria. These bureaucratic hindrances are irrelevant for a compassionate government. All barricades against displaced persons must be lifted; government and its agencies should scout for displaced persons from settlement to settlement and bring them comfort, particularly in crisis-ridden areas of the country. Corruption and government irresponsibility shouldn't infiltrate the IDP camps. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not a name people wake up one day and choose to be addressed as. It is a name brought to unfortunate fellows who are forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of war, violence, armed conflict, natural or human made disaster etc. This is the case we see today in our country Nigeria.

Ayodele (2016) alleged that President Muhammadu Buhari's seeming ineptitude has unleashed unprecedented sufferings on Nigerians, stressing that Nigeria is in the hands of wrong managers who do not know what to do and out of nepotism, are not ready to be assisted by those who know. He continued that, Nigerians are suffering presently of hungry and angry because the APC Federal Government has run the country aground. Nigeria has gone beyond recession; the economy has collapsed completely and painfully those who should revive the economy do not have any clue as to what to do. This paper therefore particularly dwells on the need for national repentance in Nigeria for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Economic Development, as well as provides recommendations.

Need for National Repentance

Nigeria has gone beyond recession and the economy has collapsed completely which has exposed Nigerian

citizens to suffering and hunger as pointed out by Ayodele (2016). This dilapidated condition of the nation is as a result of corruption at all arms of government. Osinbajo (2016) conceded that there is corruption in all the arms of government and assured Nigerians that no sector of the society will be spared in the fight against corruption under the present administration in the country.

From the foregoing therefore, a national repentance is the only solution to recession and provides direction and usher the nation into an era of divine partnership with God for the salvation of Nigeria. Repentance literally means to turn, is the activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs. It generally involves a commitment to personal change and the resolve to live a more responsible and humane life. According to the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, (2016) Nigerians should seek a national repentance from God to get out of economic recession. He pointed out that the recession being experienced in several countries of the world is ordained by God and the only solution to this is for us to show piety and repent.

Causes of Internal Displacement in Nigeria

The causes of displacement in Nigeria, as in other parts of the world are of course manifold and complex. Quite apart from natural disasters or development-induced displacement, in most cases the root causes of displacement are those that have triggered, or at least contributed to, armed conflict or situations of violence in the first place. Poverty, scarcity of resources, political instability, and weak governance and justice systems may all be catalysts for conflict-induced displacement. These factors have been perceived as the handwork of corruption and mismanagement of funds which has lead Nigeria in to the current condition of recession. These same factors often hamper the end of displacement and make the task of rebuilding lives and restoring the livelihoods of people affected by displacement all the more difficult. Since some people never realize the emotional and mental damage they do to others, Sometimes they don't even know that the damage might also affect them if not today, then tomorrow. There is therefore for a need for a National repentance.

In Nigeria today, most of the incidences of internal displacement are as a result of the emergence of Boko Haram, clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, between government forces and armed groups, ethno-religious-political conflicts but also worsened by extreme poverty, lack of equal access to socio-economic

resources and balanced development, high unemployment rate among able-bodied and frustrated youths.

Challenges Facing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria

Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) are mostly victims of the inhumanity of man against man. They are victims of various kind of injustices or violence confrontations, perpetrated by either their own government against them or by others, such as, communal clashes, terrorism, riots, religious conflicts, natural disasters, cultism and many others. The following are some of challenges facing the IDPs in Nigeria.

i. Acute Malnutrition: This is one of the Major challenges facing the IDPs in Nigeria. This is as a result of when one is not feeding well; it has an effect on his health, such as changing the colour of his hair, eyes and teeth. Some of them also have tiny legs, which drastically reduced their productivity and eventually result to death. This has also contributed to the current recession Nigeria is facing today, such that the people that would have been productive are displaced and the money the Nigerian Government would have used to empower/enhance their Agricultural activities, infrastructure and other basic amenities is being used for importation of food and other utilities for the IDPs. This also serves as another channel for corrupt Nigerians diverts funds meant for the welfare of IDPs for their own personal use. Therefore IDPs end up being fed by only one type of food such as Yam, Rice, Idomie, Garri etc. Charity (2016) also affirmed that the IDPs eat only Carbohydrate. According to Oduah C. (2016) widespread malnutrition affects thousands of children in northeastern Nigeria, where Boko Haram violence has disrupted farming and trade, in Maiduguri, Nigeria.

ii. Hunger and Starvation: This is another major challenge facing the IDPs. In Nigeria, human beings fare worse than chicken being reared in saner climes. Human beings are being jam-packed in one place and they experience a spectacle starvation in the name of IDPs camps. They most atimes die of hunger and thirst. In most cases camp officials divert food supplies meant for the hungry IDPs to the markets and fattening themselves on the leanness of the famished. There has not been a serious response in the direction of identifying and punishing these thieves and corrupt Nigerians (PM News 2016). According to The Nation News Paper (2017) Members of the #BringBackOurGirls (#BBOG) advocacy have cried out against the level of hunger and

starvation witnessed in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the country.

iii. Trauma and Bitterness: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are traumatized and frustrated because of the situation they find themselves. Most of these IDPs live in bitterness due to painful separation from their spouses, families and loved ones. Sometimes, due to rape, unwanted pregnancy and later abandonment by camp officials. Camp officials most often engage in raping and exploiting female Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). They drugged and raped their victims while others coerced them into sex through false marriage promises and financial assistance. It is disgraceful and outrageous that people who should protect these women and girls are attacking and abusing them. This has led many of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to commit suicide due to frustration.

iv. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDS): This is also another challenge that the IDPs are facing, they have unprotected sex which result to all kinds of sexual transmitted diseases (STDS) like HIV/AIDs, gonorrhoea, syphilis etc. They also suffer from hypertension, diabetes and other diseases due to lack of medical health facilities.

v. Insecurity: Their women and girls are been raped on a daily basis which is as a result of insecurity in the camp. Their youth also indulge in hard drug smoking and other criminal activities. Therefore, if nothing is done fast, they will become another nuisance thereby causing more harm to the society. There are so many other challenges IDPs encountered; such as lack of good water, good shelter, there is no anti-natal and post-natal care for their pregnant women.

Effect of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) the Host Community

Host communities experience immense pressure when internally displaced persons are accommodated. There is overcrowding of internally displaced persons who create informal settlements on communal and private land. There is also overstretching of social basic amenities as water and social services such as schools, clinics, and other social infrastructure including housing. Trees are cut down for firewood, building material and charcoal burning, causing environmental degradation in the long run. When the host community is urban, a number of internally displaced persons turn into migrants, deciding to settle and re-integrate into urban life, seeking new livelihood opportunities and a hope for a better life

which sometimes result to prostitution and other crimes. Sometimes, as internally displaced persons over-burden existing community services, resources and job or economic livelihood opportunities, tension arises between the two populations, making effective local integration difficult. Cost of living in host communities increases, especially cost of food, housing, healthcare and education.

Way of Enhancing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Living Condition

The need to enhance the living condition of IDPs in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized inasmuch as improper management of the group may make the country prone to violent conflicts and other several complexities such as epidemics. However, the enhancement of IDPs living condition cannot be left in the hands of any one individual or group. It appears that collaboration is the name of the game. The major points of divergence between enhancements of IDPs living condition in Nigeria may include the fact that government agencies are the most efficient in the enhancement of IDPs living condition in Nigeria. Apparently, international response to enhancement of IDPs living condition in Nigeria has been largely inadequate.

According to Osinbajo (2015) President Muhammadu Buhari led Government is deeply concerned about the IDPs and the living conditions in their camps, and want to assure Nigerians that the plight of the IDPs will continue to receive due attention because after all, these are our brothers and sisters, citizens of our nation. Therefore, restoring the dignity and material well being of these citizens is a key objective of the Government. The administration is now developing ways and means to enhance the services and output of all relevant agencies in this area, including NEMA, the federal government agency that has been playing an important role in taking care of a good number of IDPS in several camps. Others involved in this onerous task are state governments and volunteer agencies including our international development partners.

In order to enhance IDPs living condition, Maduka (2012) has noted that reintegration which is the final and concluding stage of enhancing IDPs living condition ultimately seeks to support people rebuild their livelihoods including housing, sources of income, economic, social and cultural activities as well as general standard of living. In this regard, the Nigerian government still has a lot to do. Also, some of the challenges they face included inconsistent and poor

feeding, poor sanitary conditions, lack of proper medical attention, deplorable sanitary condition and poor security. Although government is trying, but need to improve the welfare of IDPs in these areas. Therefore, government and NGOs should take the welfare IDPs as a priority because they are Nigerian citizens who are just victims of circumstance.

Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria

IDPs experience a wide variety of needs in the short, medium and long term. These include food, water, shelter and other basic amenities, security, physical and psychological well-being, assistance in restoring family links, health care, education, economic and social rehabilitation.

IDPs are vulnerable, whatever the cause of the displacement. They are deprived, often brutally, of their ordinary environment, and this directly threatens their ability to meet their most basic needs, especially when families are torn apart or when relatives are killed or go missing.

It is therefore paramount to take into account all the needs and rights of IDPs at every stage of their displacement. According to national policy on IPDs (2012) all rights contained in the Constitution of Nigeria statutes and domesticated sub-regional, regional and international human rights and humanitarian instruments which all citizens of Nigeria are entitled to shall be applicable to all internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Other rights of IDPs according to national policy on IPDs (2012) are as follows:

- i. All IDPs have the right to enjoy in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under both international and domestic law as do all other citizens and persons in Nigeria. However, non-citizens may not be eligible to vote and be voted for in local elections unless the law expressly entitles them to.
- ii. IDPs shall have
 - a. The right to seek safety in another part of the country;
 - b. The right to leave their country;
 - c. The right to seek asylum in another country; and
 - d. The right to be protected against forcible return to or resettlement in any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.
- iii. IDPs have a right to request and receive protection and assistance from the state and local authorities and shall not be punished or persecuted for making such a request.

iv. Vulnerable IDPs shall have a right to receive protection and assistance required by their condition or special needs. Such vulnerable IDPs shall include children accompanied, unaccompanied and orphans, women including nursing and expectant mothers and female heads of households, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

Conclusion

National repentance has every sign of improving the socio-economic wellbeing of the displaced in the country both in short and long run. When people repent of corruption and other criminal act against humanity as such basic amenities and other facilities will become more available. The achievement of Nigerian Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030 will also increasingly rely on national repentance. Therefore, Nigeria government needs to encourage religious leader to preach repentance and also create awareness and support programmes like “CHANGE BEGINS WITH ME” in entire public sector, including service delivery in health, education, etc which will go a long way in improving internally displaced persons (IDPs) economic development.

Recommendations

Practical efforts should be made by Private sector and the Nigerian government through agencies like National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and State Emergency Management Agency(SEMA) in building more internally displaced person’s (IDPs) camps that are more conducive in terms of availability of proper water, sanitation, hygiene, (WASH) and food accessibility to IDPs as well as the establishment of vocational and educational programmes that would aid internally displaced persons(IDPs) in full rehabilitation back to the society.

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