
Livelihoods Support Strategies and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Well-Being in Bakassi and Odukpani Local Governments Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examines the continuing conflict in Bakassi and Odukpani Local Government Areas of Cross River State, which has created hundreds of internally displaced persons who have been exposed to insecurity and are facing extremely challenging situations requiring interventions. It argues that the functionality of livelihood support strategies for internally displaced persons and their well-being. To determine the relationship between vocational life skills promotion and internally displaced person's social well-being, the nexus between access to supportive formal and non-formal education and internally displaced persons' social well-being was established. Utilizing relevant and related literature on sustainable livelihood based on a multi-sectoral analytical framework, the qualitative approach of survey research design enabled the generation of data from primary and secondary sources. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting respondents using unstructured questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides as instruments. Data obtained were thematically analyzed based on the objectives of the study. Findings indicate that livelihoods support services are associated with well-being where factors like community support, provision of basic services, material/relief support and psycho-social interventions are taken into account. The paper concludes that internal displacement affects the well-being of the people, thus, making livelihood support strategies remains a fundamental concern of social work.

Keywords: Livelihood support, internally displaced and well-being.

Introduction

Human social well-being is the psychological satisfaction, happiness and life fulfilment that underlie the subjective reality in which people live. This implies overcoming deprivations in essential dimensions of social life such as overcoming vulnerability to death at a relatively early age, being actively included in the world of reading and communication and having access to a decent standard of living in terms of overall economic provisioning (Watson, Emery, Bayliss, Boushel, and McInnes, K. 2012) Social and economic well-being components of human existence such as personal income and employment, productivity, leisure in terms of non-work hours and recreation, spending, consumer attitudes, and social and physical environment with minimal crime rate, danger and risk are desirable for effective individual functioning in the society (Shah and Marks, 2004). The overall level of health, social support, literacy, political participation, public safety and social security foster productive and fulfilling lives. Therefore, the interdependence of social, health, economic and environmental conditions is essential towards improving people's social and economic well-

being. This guarantees freedom from the evils of want, ignorance, squalor, malnutrition and poverty (Festus and Bassey, 2014). Securing well-being is necessarily tied to the availability of public safety and environmental security. However, it has been observed that in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries such as Nigeria, “unresolved tribal conflicts, rifts, political upheavals, inter-communal and border conflicts, natural disasters have displaced individuals, families, groups and communities from their homes or places of habitual residence. The consequence has been the forceful movement of populations to settle elsewhere” (Enrol, Simsek, Oner and Munir, 2005)

Sub-Saharan Africa, according to UNHCR 2014 (Enwereji, 2009) has “over four million displaced persons, the largest in the world”. These internally displaced persons are compelled to resettle in other environments where their needs are ignored by the government and related institutions. Being displaced could have a severe negative impact on the physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being of the person. The direct and indirect implications for the displacement of the human population are multi-various and intertwined. The repercussions could be further exposure to violence or disaster, loss of or separation from family members and friends, deterioration in living conditions, the inability to access social services etc. These adverse conditions have consequences for individuals, families and communities. Displaced persons are prone to post-traumatic stress disorders, psychosomatic illness, depression, anxiety and violence (IASC, 2007).

The internally displaced persons are exposed to adverse conditions that endanger their safety, morals, health and life. Adults and especially children are exposed to social and economic vulnerabilities. The children’s educational future and health have become seriously at risk. The lack of shelter and the anomie situation created to attract them to deviance, through exposure to drugs, alcoholism, violence and prostitution as coping strategies for survival. The internally displaced persons are vulnerable to a wide range of psychological hazards and various forms of abuse and dehumanizing experiences (Oduwole, 2013). One of the negative consequences of this phenomenon is the increasing number of children on the streets (Ogwo, 2013).

The escalating incidence of internal displacement of persons forced stakeholders such as government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other concerned citizens into seeking strategies to address causative factors such as inter-communal crises, socio-political and religious issues etc. These have a strong potential to ignite the internal displacement of the population. In circumstances where the people have been displaced, governments have endeavoured to construct temporary camps while some relocate to occupy available school buildings and churches and even integrate into other localities. For survival, temporary food supplies and relief materials are provided while in some localities, the people fend for themselves. Many of them have been neglected and exposed to severe psychological trauma. Social support is absent as their condition further strengthened their poverty situation. The governments have not been able to adequately address unmet social or economic needs as such, they have not significantly advanced their social adaptation.

Psychosocial and rehabilitative measures in the form of livelihood support strategies may help to improve their living condition and adapt to their temporary settlement. These measures could serve as an advocacy tool for programming, creating fresh policies and legitimate interventions for internally displaced persons. Support services are meant to alleviate the psycho-social trauma and provide those deprived opportunities and family mediation. Communities could understand that they are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal situations and reduce the impact of stressful situations. These rehabilitative initiatives in the form of livelihood support strategies may help to improve their living condition and adapt to temporary settlements. These support initiatives could include Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) vocational life skills promotion, established or improved access to safe and supportive formal and non-formal educational opportunities, and access to

income-generating activities. Livelihood support strategies could be considered as an advocacy tool for programming, creating fresh policies and legitimate interventions for internally displaced persons. The purpose is to ameliorate the psycho-social trauma and provide deprived opportunities and family mediation. Through these services, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) will understand that they are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal situations and also reduce the impact of stress. Based on the above, the study set out to achieve the following objectives: determine the association between vocational life skills promotion and internally displaced persons' social well-being; examine the association between established access to supportive formal and non-formal education and internally displaced persons' social well-being; investigate the association between established access to income-generating activities and internally displaced persons' social well-being.

Statement of the Problem

Internal displacement of people has severe adverse implications for their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This has been of concern to social workers, humanitarian actors, development sociologists and other concerned citizens in our environment. Internally displaced persons are exposed to violence or disaster, separated from family members and friends, unable to access and utilize basic services such as health, education, food, water, shelter and even provide for themselves. These have serious consequences for individuals, families and communities. These deprivations of essential life support services have negatively impacted the well-being of the people. The internally displaced person faces transitions dominated by human rights challenges and economic hardship. The young ones have been displaced from their nuclear families. Intercommunal conflict, instability, unrest, violence and socio-economic problems have alienated people from their ancestral homes. These people are subjected to human rights abuses such as torture, extra-judicial killings, denials and deprivation and degradation of their home areas. The cumulative impact of the trauma of conflict and the consequences of loss of life, family disruption and loss of ancestral land and other resources have been socially and psychologically devastating.

Communities in Bakassi and Odukpani local government areas of Cross River State have witnessed disruption in socio-economic lives. The children deprived of social services such as education and health care silently absorb and neglect the fear and anger of their parents, siblings and community members filled with painful experiences. The provision of livelihoods supports interventions to address the needs of internally displaced people and has become very essential. The livelihoods initiatives may be important factors in improving the social well-being of the people in the Bakassi and Odukpani communities. Moreover, existing local studies in Cross River State have not examined livelihood support strategies and internally displaced persons' social well-being. Therefore, this study filled up this gap. The question that the study answered was: to what extent are the acquisition of vocational life skills, access to safe and supportive formal and non-formal educational opportunities and access to income-generating activities interventions associated with the well-being of internally displaced persons in Bakassi and Odukpani local government areas of Cross River State, Nigeria?

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The rights of internally displaced persons to access livelihood are primarily rooted in the principle of non-discrimination, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to work. Access to education and adequate healthcare are also closely linked to the ability to develop livelihoods. Livelihood is considered a prerequisite for the exercise of other fundamental rights. The right to an adequate standard of living encompasses several more specific rights including the water right, the right to food, the right to housing and the right to clothing. The right to work simply refers to the right of everyone and to the opportunity to earn a living in a safe- work- environment and also provides for the freedom to organize and

bargain collectively. This right also prohibits compulsory or forced labour (Adamu, and Rasheed, Z, 2016). Livelihoods refers to the capabilities, strategies, strategies and assets used in making a living, that is to secure food and income through a variety of economic activities. Internally displaced persons often face more obstacles than other people in achieving livelihoods because of the loss of their assets and strategies, disputes over lost property and land, and the breakdown of their former socio-economic support network (IFSW, 2012).

Internally displaced persons are those who have not crossed an international state border but who are obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence for many reasons such as natural and man-made disasters, civil war, armed conflict, terrorism, situations of generalized violence or other special circumstances of rights violation. The adverse impact of internal displacement and resettlement on the social well-being of affected persons is a serious challenge. The issue of internal displacement is a life-transitory phenomenon (Ibeanu, 2015). The internally displaced population is a global crisis affecting 20 to 25 million people in over 40 countries, almost in all regions of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa, with half of the world's displaced populations in some 21 countries, is the worst hit (GRID 2016). Women and children constitute the most vulnerable category and with less attention thus exposing them to greater risks which significantly affect their well-being (Eweka, and Olusegun, 2016).

The Nigerian people have been forcibly displaced across the country from the period of 30 months of the Civil War till now. Eweka and Olesgun (2016) observed that "only rough estimates of the number of IDPs and their location are available as there are no reliable statistics on internal displacement in the country." Displaced people experience severe trauma. The social and psychological impacts have been devastating. Human well-being is important and is contingent upon several factors. Mirth (2014) observed that "achieving individual and collective well-being depends upon what happens in a variety of areas. Meeting the minimum level of need is essential in each of these interrelated areas. Positive well-being is associated with a complex set of psychological social forces. Adverse social impacts are prompted by violence, loss and displacement and by the changes and stressful circumstances in which they live, sometimes in an artificial environment or camp." Social well-being amounts to approximating and reinforcing normal family and community functioning (Mirth, 2014)

Social well-being affects all dimensions of the individual's life in the family, community and entire societal life. The implications of the multiple artificial and natural disasters experienced by internally displaced persons for their well-being are life-threatening. The disintegration of the family or the home and the collapse of income sources that have consistently provided people with their livelihood sources have adverse implications for people's social well-being. In a situation where these social issues affect displaced persons, the dangers to more vulnerable categories such as elderly people, mothers and children etc. are more pronounced requiring interventions in the form of access to safe and supportive formal and non-formal education, vocational life skills promotion, and promoting income generated activities. Those are mechanisms that can facilitate the participation of displaced populations in the planning of their future (IFSW, 2017).

Conceptually, social well-being is familiar to public health professionals in the context of social and income equality, social capital, social trust, social connectedness and social networks. Social well-being is the basis for social equality; it is the antidote to racism, stigma, violence and crime (The UK Faculty of Public Health, 2011). Social well-being is the sum of individual mental well-being in a group, community or society; the quality of government-locally, organizationally, nationally and internationally; the quality of services and provision of support for those in need; the fair distribution of resources including income; the norm about interpersonal relationships in a group, community or society including respect for others and their needs, compassion and empathy and authentic interaction (The UK Faculty of Public Health, 2011).

UNICEF (2005) conceptualized internally displaced persons as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or 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 state border.”The United Nations Children’s Fund (2007) commented that:

the massive psychological needs of these vulnerable persons, call for a comprehensive plan for rehabilitation including counselling and other psychiatric services, medications, livelihood support and empowerment, mental infrastructure enhancement, the training of local staff and health care workers and various other capacity-building efforts.

The internally displaced persons are vulnerable to family and community disruption, and lack of basic needs exposes them to abuse and violence. Interventions should focus on providing basic survival needs such as food, water, healthcare, shelter, and educational and social services programmes that can enhance the transition from traumatic emergency experiences to normal recovery and development (Ashara, 2017).

Vocational life skills promotion and social wellbeing

Impacting vocational life skills implies acquiring appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes for functional positive living. Vocational knowledge helps in bringing about changes in behaviour and can be a foundation for taking appropriate measures for self-employment (WHO, 1994). The IDP need to develop healthier, more constructive strategies that can help them to deal with difficult life circumstances. Positive coping and vocational strategies stem from the acquisition and practice of psychosocial skills or life skills, practical skills and performance, and vocational and livelihood skills (Enwereji 2009). Enwereji (2009) commented that exposing IDPs to life skills or psychosocial skills by civil society organizations can help in decision-making and problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotion and stress. Vocational skill development is primarily aimed at economically empowering children with an emphasis on capacity building for positive living (Hussein, 1998). It is designed to improve the quality of their lives. Hussein observed that imparting vocational skills implies creating prospects for jobs and making IDPs self-reliant and more productive.

Access to Safe and Supportive Education and Social Well-being.

Individuals feel strongly about education, not only for what skills a person can gain through school attendance but also because education is an important source of power. The assumption is that if education is provided to internally displaced persons as is demanded in Universal Basic Education, their power base would broaden significantly (Oduwole, 2013). Ibiyanu (2015) observed that IDPs stand a chance to also benefit from non-formal education programmes to make them more protective human beings. Safe and supportive education exposes individuals to appropriate activities that can help them apply this spirit in their day-to-day relationships. Ajiboye,., Akinlabi, and Ajokpaniovo, (2015) commented that internally displaced persons can be rehabilitated educationally in the environment by developing awareness and appreciation of the environment and developing people’s talents in harmony with changing environment. Safe and supportive education fosters the development, equipping beneficiaries with knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of society and derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from society: discharge their civil obligation completely.

Theoretical Framework

Displacement eventually leads to disruption of access to livelihoods. Displacement can lead to impoverishment through lack of access to safe and supportive formal and non-

formal education, lack of access to income-generating activities, psychosocial issues, homeless, and lack of life skills development (Krantz 2001). Livelihood comprised the capacities, assets both social and materials as well as activities required for a means of well-being. Livelihood is sustainable when it copes with and recovers from shocks, and stresses and enhances its assets and capabilities both at present and in future (Krantz 2001). Sustainable livelihood is possible through physical, natural, financial, human and social measures (Scoones, 1998). This approach explains rehabilitation as the restoration of the livelihoods, the psychosocial system as well as income of the internally displaced to at least the barest minimum (Scoones 1998). Livelihood has become more popular from a development perspective as a measure of conceptualizing the income-generating activities of internally displaced persons (Adato & Meinzen-Dick, 2012). This approach emphasizes both social and economic aspects of livelihood. The sustainability aspect of this approach aids to minimize the vulnerability of internally displaced persons to the overall sustainability of their livelihoods.

Methodology

The qualitative approach of survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised all internally displaced persons temporarily residing in Obomitiat primary school having been displaced from their homes due to a land dispute and the Ubambat community residing in Akpap, Akamkpa ward due to inter-communal conflict with Ikot Offiong Ambai all in Odukpani local government area. The population also included displaced persons from Esighi in Odukpani, currently staying in neighbouring communities close to Esighi itself. Three such communities were considered. The exact population of the IDPs in the two local government areas was unknown because they are not concentrated in government-approved resettlement areas.

Study Area: Odukpani

Odukpani Local Government is one of the local government areas in Cross River State. It has an estimated population of 192,884 (NPC, 2006). It has 13 political wards. It is characterized by hard-to-reach riverine areas. Access to the riverine areas by boat is made difficult by ubiquitous and uncontrollable water hyacinth. Other non-riverine areas have also been rendered inaccessible by impassable roads. Frequent inter boundary skirmishes with their neighbours and the neighbouring Akwa Ibom state have rendered some communities inaccessible and resulted in a multitude of internally displaced persons. The perennial crises here are attributed to inter-communal conflict motivated by the scramble for resources and boundary adjustment. The struggle here often escalates into warfare where houses are destroyed and communities burnt down forcing people to flee for refuge in localities outside their homes. Some have annexed primary schools and turned such into temporary homes. Some of these warring communities whose inhabitants have been displaced include Obomitiat, New Netem and Ikot Offiong. The people have been internally displaced to take shelter in localities far from their homes.

Bakassi

The displacement of indigenes of Bakassi victims in the Bakassi Local Government Area is internal. This plight of displacement started with the transfer of sovereignty from neighbouring Nigeria, as a result of the judgment in the International Court of Justice, a verdict that the peninsula should be handed over to the Republic of Cameroun. In response to the verdict, the people of Bakassi had to relocate to Ikang, Ekpri-Ikang, Nsidung, Esighi and other parts of the Local Government Area as their new residences with the expectation that the Federal Government of Nigeria would provide them with employment opportunities for the unemployed citizens and formulate policies that give priority attention to the people. But none of these was done as they were expected. Then it was this frustration that made the youth in Bakassi think that the rights of citizens are no more regarded as important which made them believe that they were all marginalized. Therefore, the only way they could sustain their

lives was by involving themselves in all kinds of criminal activities, such as kidnapping, armed robbery, stealing, militancy and many others. The involvement in these activities became a serious problem as people were compelled to relocate from their homes to other places.

This displacement has affected economic development in various communities. The youth carried out acts of aggression that significantly degraded and devalued both the environment and the people in Bakassi. Burning of homes and kidnapping people for ransom became part of daily sorrowful existence. People fled because of the insecurity of life and property. Therefore, the displacement of indigenes of Bakassi victims was internal and it is caused by the militant group in Bakassi. In Bakassi, the militants under the aegis of the Bakassi Strike Force (BSF) have reportedly set up a parallel administration. The civil and traditional authorities have been displaced by militants. Some of the affected communities here included Ikang, Epri-Ikang, Ikot Obok Effiom, and Esighi. The militant activities were much pronounced in the Esighi community which the people consider as their camp.

Sample size

The sample size was ninety -seven (97) respondents purposively selected from the study area. Internally displaced persons temporarily staying in Obomitiat Primary School constituted Cluster 1, those staying in the Akpap community, and Cluster 2, all in Odukpani local government area. Cluster 3 is Nsidung, Cluster 4 is Ikot Obot and Cluster 5 is Effiom all in Bakassi local government area. The researcher used a qualitative study design using Focus Group Discussion to conduct the research. In the three communities in Bakassi, community meetings were initially held to identify persons displaced from the Esighi community. FGDs were categorized into male and female sessions. Ten FGDs from two homogenous sex categories were conducted. Data from the FGDs were analyzed using content analysis revealing the impact of livelihood support strategies on internally displaced persons' well-being. Table 1 below indicates the distribution of demographic data. It indicates that more females were involved, the age bracket of 30 – 35 had the highest number of people, and the majority were married. Also, a majority had acquired secondary education. The dominant religion is Christianity and most respondents were traders, farmers and others involved in fishing.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents on demographic data

S/n	Variables	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Sex		
	Male	41	42.26
	Female	56	57.73
	Total	97	100
2.	Age group		
	18-23	20	20.61
	24-29	18	18.55
	30-35	24	24.7
	36-41	22	22.68
	42 years and above	13	13.40
	Total	97	100

3.	Marital Status		
	Single	10	31
	Married	36	37.11
	Widows	13	13.40
	Divorce	12	12.37
	Others	6	6.18
	Total	97	100
4.	Educational attainment		
	Primary	30	31
	Secondary	43	44.32
	Tertiary	2	2.06
	Non-formal	22	23
	Total	97	100
5.	Religion		
	Christianity	81	83.5
	Islamic	-	-
	Traditional religion	16	16.49
	Total	97	100
	Occupations status	9	
	Civil servant	21	9.27
	Trading	31	21.64
6.	Farming	3	31.95
	Driving	21	3.09
	Fishing	12	21.64
	Unemployed		12.37
	Total	117	100

Source: Field survey, 2019 – 2022.

Result and Discussion

The FGDs submissions indicated a positive association between vocational life skills and IDPs' social well-being. According to the participants, “vocational life skills help us express interest in potential livelihoods activities even though we are not living in our original home so that we do not stay idle”. They further expressed that “learning necessary life skills will enhance our ability to live and work independently”. Existing literature report that skills are not only a human right but an enabling right for full employment of another human right (CEDEFOP, 2012). The FGDs further revealed that “our full participation in vocational life skills development is important for the enhancement of our social wellbeing as we learn skills to make money for survival”. The observation supports existing literature that completion of vocational life skills development may be crucial to internally displaced persons accessing further vocational education or full employment opportunities in future (Fasching,2014). According to them the FGD participants, “allowing us to have the chance to learn to do many things can make us strong economically; we can become self-reliant because we know that the government will not give us everything we need to live well. Although we are in another place, we can build our capacity for better living we can earn some money and live as if we are in our village”.

Access to Safe and Supportive Education (both formal and informal) and Social Wellbeing

The qualitative analysis revealed that exposing IDPs to safe and supportive education can positively influence their social well-being. Education for internally displaced persons is essential both as a component of peacebuilding, social well-being and as a human right. The observation here supports WRC (2000) that safe and supportive formal and non-formal education provides social, psychological as well as the general well-being of the internally displaced persons. According to FGD:

Displacement is a very stressful and difficult period in our lives where we feel rejected abandoned and not needed, we are all weak and vulnerable. We all think that if opportunities are created for us to access education, we will be able to contribute meaningfully to change our situation.

The discussants reported that:

Our people who have not acquired formal education should be encouraged because we do not know what to do for ourselves. We feel strongly about education and wish to have the opportunity to go further. Education will sharpen our skills and broaden our power. We need survival skills and learning opportunities since we cannot go back home.

Bennani (2008) observed that rehabilitation for IDPs should take into consideration the need to provide formal and non-formal education both for academic and practical purposes. Those attending formal education have the opportunity to be exposed to appropriate activities that can help them develop the right attitude that will subsequently enable them to apply this spirit in their day-to-day relationships. According to this discussant:

We can benefit well from rehabilitation programmes educationally and informally. Though some of us are educated we can develop better awareness and appreciate our environment, though the insecurity in our home has affected us so much look at us we are in another land.

Income-Generating Activities and Social Wellbeing

Access to income-generating activities exerts a significant impact on the social well-being of internally displaced persons who need various resources to meet their physical and emotional needs. Measures to rehabilitate these persons, according to CEDEFOP (2012) must aim to create a safe and supportive environment, provide strategies for income generation, build skills, counselling and improve services. The FGD participant admitted that: “our issue demand urgent attention. We need housing resources and we need help to make us self-reliance since we have left our farmlands, fishing activities and things that used to sustain us.” We just need what can make our lives a bit more comfortable. Our homes have been burnt down.” These participants further reported that “because of our condition of existence, accessing activities that give us money can be a strong source of support in our effort to resettle in another environment. Without this, we cannot survive. Some of us can engage in any type of work just to enable us to get money. Most of us lost our children and dear ones during the conflict that caused us to flee. We cannot be well, physically, mentally, economically and socially without engaging in things that can give us money”.

Conclusion

Displaced persons suffer cumulative negative physical, social, emotional and spiritual consequences that affect their well-being. The exposure to disaster-deteriorated living conditions, inability to access social welfare services, and loss of family members all have serious negative implications for their social well-being. Therefore, intervention and rehabilitation responses in the form of livelihoods support strategies of income-generating activities, vocational life skills and access to safe and supportive formal and non-formal

education are crucial to ensure broad and effective prevention and response mechanisms. All displaced persons require access to food, shelter, hygiene, healthcare, education and security as essentials to re-establish social well-being. From the foregoing analysis, both the government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) should assist in solving the challenging issue of income-generating activities. Their inability to utilize their land and traditional livelihood resources incapacitates them economically living them devoid of food security. They should have access to supportive formal and non-formal education as a means to mitigate the psychosocial impact of conflict. This provides essential building blocks for social reconstruction, future economic stability and overall social well-being. Civil society organizations, the government and all humanitarian actors should sponsor and promote entrepreneurial projects in their environment to enable IDPs to acquire vocations of life skills.

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