SOCIAL WORK AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) IN NIGERIA:

THE NEED FOR INCREASE SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the number of Internally Displaced Persons has continued to double annually, especially at North Eastern Region as identified by the International Organizations for Migration. The Internal Displacement is caused by a connection of interrelated factors which include: violence, communal clashes, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani Herdsmen attacks, natural disaster which include flood and storm etc.

The Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani herdsmen attacks have caused over 2million people to be Internal Displaced, making Nigeria to be the home of African largest Internally Displaced persons. Thus, multiple complex causes trigger Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria, providing significant challenges to Nigerian government, social workers and Non Governmental Organizations on the ground. Although social work in Nigeria is relatively a new profession but there is increase need for social work intervention in the situation of Internally Displaced Persons and the like. Social work aims at provision of services to the needy.

Social work is anticipated as a promising alternative for bringing relief to the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. Thus, the need for increase social work intervention cannot be over emphasized. This work covers: (a) Introduction (b) Nigeria as a nation and the current challenges (c) Facts on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (d) Problems of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (e) Social work in the context of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria and the need for increase social work intervention and (f) Conclusive remarks.

Key Words: social work, intervention, internally displaced persons, Nigeria.

A. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, Internal Displacement is the great tragedy of our time. Internal Displacement refers to the forced movement of people within the country they live in. Millions of people are forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence each year. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violation of human right or natural or human made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Guiding Principles on international Displacement, 1998). They are called refugees if they leave their national state borders.

Over the years, the growing number of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria is becoming alarming. There are a lot of internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) (2017) reported that growing internal security challenges have led to many Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. While some of them live in registered Internally Displacement Persons' Camps, some do not as they put up with family and friends. The responses by the various organizations towards the plight of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria are associated with problems because they are carried out more by non social work professionals. Thus, the emphasis of this paper for the need for increase social work intervention.

B. NIGERIA AS A NATION AND THE CURRENT CHALLENGES

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, commonly referred to as Nigeria is a Federal Republic in West Africa, bordering Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the East and Niger in the north. Its coast in the South lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. It comprises thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory where the capital Abuja is located. Nigeria that became independent on 1st October 1960 is officially a democratic secular country.

According to Ezeanya (2010:21) the geographical area that is today known as Nigeria was inhabited by people of varied and often conflicting traditional settings, cultural dispositions and socio-political and religious orientations and engage mainly in agriculture and internal trading prior to the coming of the colonialists. In their respective domain they cherished what they shared together as a people and fared well among themselves. With the advent of the colonialists and the expatriate missionaries, westernization of the African reality became the order of the day. Divide and rule politics and religious bigotry were used in destroying the Socio-political, economic, cultural and religious systems of the people.

According to Okafor (1997) the colonialists brought the people together against their wish and with time broadly grouped them into two, namely, Northern Nigeria and southern Nigeria. To further maximize colonial interests, the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria took place in 1914. The name Nigeria is a coinage suggested by Flora Shaw, the girlfriend of Lord Fredrick Lugard who later married him.

According to Oyeniyi (2010) Nigeria is viewed as a multinational state as it is inhabited by over 500 ethnic groups of which the three largest are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba and these ethnic groups speak over 500 different languages and are identified with wide variety of cultures. The official language is English. Nigeria is divided roughly in half between Christians who live mostly in the southern part of the country and Muslims who live mostly in the north.

According to Akinyele (2013) Nigeria is only a geographical entity existing in maps, papers and lips but not in the hearts of its citizens. Thus, Nigeria is not seen as a country or nation. It is a name of a land where five hundred tribes converge. Nigeria makes news in world media as a

Country with rich human and natural resources but ranks among the poorest countries in the world.

According to Uwalaka (2003) statistics show that one percent (1%) of Nigerians own and control ninety-nine percent (99%) of the country's wealth, while ninety-nine percent (99%) of Nigerians own and control one percent (1%) of the Country's Wealth.

This amazing height of inequality is never headed to in the government policies so far and the effect comes out in the different agitations from different parts of the country. Niger–Delta region has several militant groups fighting the government with arms and ammunitions in their agitation for justice to be extended to their region from where oil and gas which form part of the major income earners to Nigeria are got. The Eastern region agitates for the sovereign state of Biafra. Even the Western region also agitates for the Sovereign state of Oduduwa and the Northern region that had produced almost all the presidents of the federation since independence are also complaining of marginalization in the distribution of the country's wealth.

C. FACTS ON INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the number of Internally Displaced Persons has doubled more than in the span of three (3) years, from 868,000 people identified by the Nigerian Government in the North Eastern Regions at the end of 2014 to 1.7 Million people by June 2016 (Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) report released by International Organization for Migration). The report noted that displacement is caused by a connection of interrelated factors which include: violence, insurgency, communal clashes, natural disasters which include flood and storms etc. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram Insurgency has caused over 2 Million People to be internally displaced, making Nigeria the home of African's largest Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Escalating communal clashes in different parts of Nigeria has also resulted in many people fleeing their homes and property. Clashes between farmers and herdsmen over grazing lands in states such as Enugu (Nibo in Uzouwani Local Government Area), Benue, Taraba, Zamfara and parts of Kaduna have left a bloody trail with its attendant destruction of houses, property, farmlands and whole communities.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2017) pointed out that more than 1000 people have been killed in communal clashes since last December 2016. The violence has been almost on a daily basis in some places like Benue State, Kogi State and in a few other places, it is almost on a weekly basis. At the current moment, it is hard to give the right answer to the question on Nigeria's Internally Displaced Persons as Boko Haram continues seizing communities in the North East forcing people out of their homes.

Some of the representatives of Boko Haram commit terrorist and suicidal acts across other states in Nigeria. This situation causes problem between Muslim and Christians in North East region and has also extended to other parts of Nigeria.

According to Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Round II Report of (2016), the total of 2,093,030 IDPs (370,389 households) were identified an Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Kano, Zamfara states and Abuja Federal Capital Territory.

Also the Report of the Round XXI Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) (2018) assessment by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which aims to improve understanding of the scope of displacements, return and the needs of the affected populations in conflict-affected states of North Eastern Nigeria identified 1,782,490 individuals as displaced in the affected

states, representing a 4.5 percent increase (79,810 people) in comparison to the 1,702,680

individuals identified in Round XX (December 2017) as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: A PROFILE OF DISPLACEMENT IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

STATE	ROUND XX DEC (2017)	ROUND XXI (FEB 2018	CHANGE
Adamawa	142,175	164,150	+21,975
Buchi	53,357	53,309	-48
Borno	1,314,509	1,364,539	+50,030
Gombe	28,606	31,909	+3,303
Taraba	59,019	63,272	+4,253
Yobe	105,014	105,311	+297
Total	1,702,680	1,782,490	+79,810

Table 1 above shows changes in IDPs Figures by state between Round XX in December 2017

and Round XXI in February 2018. Borno state is the most affected state in North Eastern

Nigeria, continues to host the highest number of IDPs (1,364,539). Adamawa, with 164,150

displaced persons, hosts the second highest number of IDPs followed by Yobe with 105,311

IDPs.

In the six (6) North-Eastern Nigerian States, 26 percent of IDPs were displaced in 2014,

27percent in 2015 and 2016 respectively while 19percent were displaced in 2017. Table 2 below

provides the details on the year of displacement of IDPs:

Table 2: YEAR OF DISPLACEMENT.

STATE	BEFORE 2014	2014	2015	2016	2017
ADAMAWA	0%	25%	33%	19%	23%
BAUCHI	28%	39%	25%	5%	3%
GOMBE	4%	37%	26%	19%	13%
TARABA	4%	39%	18%	11%	29%
YOBE	0%	44%	18%	29%	19%
BORNO	0%	24%	28%	29%	19%
OVERALL	1%	26%	27%	27%	19%

D. PROBLEMS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NIGERIA.

Internally Displaced People face a lot of problems in Nigeria. These problems are enormous and it is really a personal matter for every displaced person. According to Displacement Tracking Matrix (2018) report, in a survey conducted among 23,994 displaced persons, 70% classified food as their main problem. Notably, 13% percent pointed to non food items, 8% identified shelter and 5% highlighted medical services as a key unmet needs. Nevertheless, according to Ibenegbu (2018) it is possible to determine the top five (5) problems of internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria and these include:

1. Lack of Federal Government Help: The Federal Government of Nigeria leaves internally Displaced Citizens to fend for themselves. Most of the support for IDPs comes from volunteers and internationally Organizations. The Federal Government has not organized any adequate policy towards IDPs.

2. Lack of Financial Supports: Neither government nor volunteers can provide IDPs with sufficient financial support. Therefore they have difficulties not only with finding a place to live but also no money to feed their children.

3. Intolerance: Nigeria has problem with inner tolerance towards our own people. Two different tribes may be sworn enemies and they may have problems when it comes to overcoming their differences even during turbulent times.

4. Lack of medical supplies: one of the main contributors towards medical supplies for Internally Displaced Persons is International Organization. The United Nations have continued to provide humanitarian aid to the conflict zones in Nigeria. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also provided medical helps and eases the problems of IDPs in Nigeria but the medical supplies are inadequate.

5. Violence: The United Nations representatives have continued to bring awareness to the issue of violence towards IDPs in Nigeria. One of the reasons for this violence is the misunderstanding of meaning of IDPs. Some Nigerians see IDPs as a threat to their jobs and their Communities. Moreover, there are also reports of violence on the basis of religion. The UN have expressed their concerns towards these act of violence.

E. SOCIAL WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NIGERIA AND THE NEED FOR INCREASE SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

In Nigeria, multiple complex causes trigger displacement providing significant challenge to Nigerian Government, Social Workers and Non Governmental Organizations on the ground. However, the involvement of professional social workers in social work intervention in solving problems of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria is almost non-existent. The

non social workers who see themselves as social workers in the field are more and working in the Internally Displaced Persons' Camps and Host Communities. Nonetheless, many measures are taken by the Nigerian Government, social workers and Non Government Organization (NGOs) in Nigeria. The government from the beginning is doing their best to get the Internally Displaced Persons settle. The government built camps, for instance according to Nwabughiogu (2017) there are four IDP camps in Abuja, namely: (a)Lugbe IDP cam p (b)Area one IDP camp (c) New Kuchingoro IDP camp and (d)Kuje IDP camp, supply relief materials and provides security in these camps and host communities.

The churches, communities and special centres donate relief materials to the insurgency victims living in the camps for IDP. In fact, Non Governmental organizations in Nigeria are assisting the most vulnerable population by distributing food and providing health and protection services by building latrines and reinforcing access to water with the supports for the government.

According to Ekpe and Mamah (1997) remedial model of social work is still being practised in Nigeria. Social Workers in working with Internally Displaced Persons should focus on sustainable programmes rather than relief dependence. Social Worker should protect and assist everyone who has been affected by forced displacement. Many of these victims need to be empowered. Social workers should assume coordination and operational delivery roles in IDP situations to prevent further displacement. Social workers should provide life saving assistance and work to identify solutions to the problems of host communities. Social workers should work with other humanitarian agencies to make sure that they reach everyone in need like children as they also are victims of internally displacement. Most of the children in camps go through a traumatic stress due to poor living conditions. Social work in Nigeria

is relatively new profession and has many roles to play in the situation of internal displacement and in working with Internally Displaced Persons. Thus, the need for increase social work intervention.

F. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS:

The issue of remedial approach in tracking the problems of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria should be de-emphasized. The remedial approach has tended to over emphasized case work in particular with its focus on relief work at the expense of more appropriate approaches such as developmental approach, sustainable programmes etc that could help the Internally Displaced Persons to survive in the new environment where they find themselves. Furthermore, there is need for increase recognition of social work in Nigeria, especially on the area of Internal Displacement. Social work in Nigeria sadly has not been accorded equal status with other social sciences disciplines. Hence, in many instances, social work in Nigeria has received only limited support. Thus, while many other professions are enjoying enormous backing and promotion by the authorities, for social work in Nigeria, this has hardly been the case.

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