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WELFARE DEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE INTERNALLYDISPLACEDPERSONA IN YOBE STATE

By

Musa Bulama Musa[1]
Mohammed Kaku[2]
Dauda Mohammed Atiyaye[3]
Aliyu Sabo Aliyu[4]

Department of Political Science[1]
Federal University, Gashua
Yobe State
Department of Public Administration[2,3,&4]
Federal Polytechnic Damaturu,
Yobe State.

Email: musabulamamusa@gmail.com[1]
Email: mkaku1970@gmail.com; mkaku@fedpodam.edu.ng[2]
GSM: 08068172006
Email: dmatiyaye@fedpodam.edu.ng[3]
Email: asa4dat@gmail.com[4]

Abstract

The massive displacement of people in northeast Nigeria attracted many domestic and international donor agencies to the rescue of a starving population that were forcefully ejected from their homes. The welfare packages are mostly food interventions but also include cash injections mostly from international donors and development organizations such as the UNDP. While this remains a welcome humanitarian intervention, sustaining it for a long time portends lowering the spirit of self-reliance and encouraging overdependence on welfare packages for survival. This study employs qualitative method and interviewed 7 heads of displaced households and 5 members of host communities including members of Civil Society Organizations, traditional authorities, women group, and an official of the State Emergency Management Agency to get insightful opinions on the trend of social interventions and its implication of self-reliance among displaced communities. The results revealed that while there exists massive poverty that call for more welfare packages, especially food intervention, there seem to be increasing overdependence on welfare packages for survival to an extent that a significant number of displaced families are no longer ready to go back to the farm. The study recommends inter alia, government's renewed concerns towards empowerment through skill acquisition schemes to encourage self-reliance while attending to essential humanitarian needs. More so, government should focus more on addressing the issues of recurring insurgency in rural areas and also rural development so as to encourage return of the IDPs to their original places of abode.

Keywords: Displacement, Welfare, Dependence, Skill-acquisition

Introduction

Displacements throughout world, is increasing in both intensity and extensity. Wars both

across borders and within nation states are forcing the exodus of people from their original places of residence to settle in societies far from their own with neither reliable means of earning nor effective social integration plan. In North-eastern Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgency has been wreaking havoc since 2009, about 420,072 households comprising 2,046,604 individuals are displaced with Yobe state hosting about 139,393 (IOM, 2020). Such number of displaced individuals initially rely on common agrarian resources such as forest and its products, water bodies and and farmlands for survival but with the influx of both domestic and international nongovernmental organisations sponsoring aid-focussed welfare programmes that supply food and non-food interventions, internally displaced persons in the state are becoming aid-dependent and abandoning their earlier productive engagements.

Scholars are in agreement that there is massive need for humanitarian assistance in the region as 73% of displaced communities are in need of food interventions and global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates of 10.7% were recorded in Borno, 7.5% in Adamawa and 13.6% in Yobe (UNOCHA, 2021). However, continued supply of food and non-food relief materials is having its negative repercussions on the drive towards self-reliance among migrants. A growing body of research indicates that migrant welfare is increasingly making displaced households aid-dependent which could potentially lower the motivation to be productive, self-reliant and self-sustaining. Though with some variations, others believe that welfare dependence is more prevalent among migrants than vulnerable members of the hosting communities (Barette &McCarthy, 2008). Conte & Mazza (2019) contends that even among migrants, welfare-reliance is dependent on demographic variables such as age, gender, and residence. Hence, this paper explores aid-dependence among Internally Displaced Persons in Yobe state, Nigeria and how aid-dependence influences the possibility of return to productive and self-reliant means of livelihood.

This paper examines the need to balance attention to the needs of IDPs – providing the basic human needs without which survival could be endangered and empowering them to engage in viable and sustainable means of supporting lives and families by pushing them out of the comfort zone of aid-dependent livelihood.

Statement of research problem

The prevailing phenomenon of displaced people in northeast Nigeria attracted many domestic and international donor agencies to the rescue of a starving population that were forcefully ejected from their original places of abode. The internally displaced persons gain access to various handouts both in form of food and non-food packages. The welfare packages are mostly food interventions and also include cash injections mostly from international donors and development organizations such as the UNDP. While this remains a welcome humanitarian intervention, sustaining it for a long time portends lowering the spirit of self-reliance and encouraging overdependence on welfare packages for survival. This research therefore seeks to investigate to unveil how seeming dependence on welfare packages retard the spirits of self-reliance among the vulnerable populace.

Objectives of the study

This study primarily seeks to find out the adverse effects of dependence by the Internally Displaced persons on welfare packages from government and Non-governmental bodies.

The Study area

This study was conducted in Damaturu metropolis, the capital of Yobe State in northeastern Nigeria. The concern for the area was informed by the prevailing circumstances that justified the massive presence of internally displaced persons in the area. The more than a decade long phenomenon of insurgency has forced many to seek for safer places hence the study area.

Definition of Concepts

Welfare dependence:

Welfare dependency is the state in which a person or household is reliant on government welfare benefits for their income for a prolonged period of time, and without which they would not be able to meet the expenses of daily living.

Internally Displaced persons

The internally displaced persons refer to those who are forced to leave their homes of residences but remain within their country's borders. In this study the cause of displacement was insurgency.

Literature

In the global north, studies that seek to examine welfare dependence among migrants have reached advanced stages of disintegrating variables along demographic characteristics of migrants especially on comparative basis against the level of dependence among natives (Borjas, 1999) and seeking to know which characteristics of migrants can be relied upon to reduce aid-dependence. To an extent, some studies attribute welfare dependence to how welfare systems are designed (Conte & Mazza, 2019). This denotes that welfare projects that focus on economic empowerment such as skill acquisition projects, monitored cash interventions that provide start-up capital for businesses and provision of employment opportunities are more sustainable and capable of reducing overdependence on aid than welfare systems that are designed to provide food and other household essentials. The former goes in concordance with United Nation's guidance on humanitarian relief which expects relief packages to give way, in a short order to development projects that target reconstruction, rehabilitation and reorientation of societies in order to restore normalcy (Aleinikoff, 2015). This is often not the case in countries experiencing mass displacement like Nigeria.

Additionally, welfare dependent families are likely to transmit aid-dependence to their children because of family socialisation. Growing up with parents who solely rely on public aid will deny children access to information and training on economic activities. It also denies them access to employment ethics and training on requisite work ethics to make them economically employable in the labour market. Studying intergenerational correlations, (Levine & Zimmerman, 1996) found evidence of generational transfer of dependence leading to generational cycle of poverty. Scholar also found that children whose parents receive welfare packages hardly attend schools and are less likely to graduate from secondary schools (Ku & Plotnick, 2003; Duncan & Yeung, 1995). The intergeneration transmission of poverty and culture of dependence breeds negative values, attitudes and behaviours that have consequential effects that establish new norms. The new norms are subconsciously accepted because aid-recipients are conditioned to see it as the right way of earning a living (Bane & Elwood, 1994). (Balistreri, 2010) concludes that transmitting welfare dependence to the next generation depends on demographic and socioeconomic

status and values of the family and the surrounding communities. While Families that were economically strong assimilate into host communities at middle or higher levels, poor migrant families assimilate at low levels and therefore assume the attitudinal dispositions of the lower classes.

As a solution, social integration at various levels and for all categories of people is often suggested. Scholars emphasise the imperative of integrating migrants into employment schemes, business and other economic activities in order to encourage quick assimilation into host societies. Integrating migrant children into school system severs the generational chain of dependence, and socialise children into host culture including employment and work ethics. However, Pape & Sharma (2020) warns that regardless of the essentiality of local and labour integration, it may not be enough to reverse welfare dependence without the necessary redirecting welfare packages to focus on making IDPs economically productive in a sustainable

Segregating the data along residence types in Africa, especially in Nigeria, Somalia and fashion (Pape & Sharma, 2020). Sudan reveals that camp based IDPs have lower rates of labour force participation and lower rate of employment than IDPs living in host communities primarily because of the ease of assimilation among the latter group. Similarly, in all the three countries, camp based IDPs have propensity for welfare dependence and little or no penchant for labour integration than those living with host communities (Pape & Sharma, 2020). This unequivocally shows the need for local integration at early stage of displacement to introduce migrants and their children to the rudiments and essentiality of gainful employment and reduce the risk of creating addiction to food interventions.

Theoretical Framework

Structural-functionalist approach was adopted as a theoretical base for this study. This theory was popularized by political scientist Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell in 1970's to compare political systems. They argued that, in order to understand vividly a political system, it is necessary to understand not only its institutions (or structures) but also their various functions. They also insisted that these institutions, to be properly understood, must be placed in a meaningful and dynamic historical context.

The structural-functional approach is based on the premise that a political system is made up of several key components, including the organs of government viz: the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary. More so, there are the political Parties, interest groups in the polity. In addition to structures, Almond and Powell stressed that a political system comprised of various functions, chiefly, the functions are political socialization, recruitment and communication: socialization refers to the way in which societies pass along their values and beliefs to succeeding generations, and in political terms describe the process by which a society inculcates civic virtues, or the habits of effective citizenship; recruitment denotes the process by which a political system generates interest, engagement and participation from citizens; and communication refers to the way that a system promulgates its values and information.

In the 1960s, functionalism was criticized for being unable to account for social change. *Craib, I. (1992).* Also, it ignores inequalities including race, gender, class, which cause tension and conflict.

A further criticism directed at functionalism is that it contains no sense of ((agency, that individuals are seen as puppets, acting as their role requires. Yet Holmwood states that the most sophisticated forms of functionalism are based on "a highly developed concept of action,"*Anthony. (1984)*.

The choice of this theory to address issues regarding the need for management of internally displaced persons in Yobe State was informed by the understanding that, there is a nexus between human needs satisfaction and the role of government in fulfilling those needs. The core of the argument is that, satisfying human needs will prevent occurrence of humanitarian crises.

Welfare dependence occur because government could not address the plights of the vulnerable populace diagnostically, the failure to respond to the needs and aspirations of the vulnerable are the major cause of dependence on aid. Had government catered for their needs, the IDPs would have returned to their original places of abode. The result of such psycho-social and personality imbalances, social harmony become destabilized and eventually leading to chaos and loss of social order. Culture of poverty become entranched in the communities. The theory therefore is relevant because if government continued to be irresponsive to the core cause of displacement, perpetual aids to the IDPs will rather results in gross welfare dependence. Yobe State government should as a fundamental function of the state towards fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities, address the daunting challenges.

Methods & Data

This paper employs qualitative research tools to explore the perceptions of Internally Displaced Persons, officials of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), community leaders, Civil Society Organisations and women groups. Data was generated from SEMA officials, CSOs and Women Groups through face to face interview and phone calls where expedient. Focus Group discussion was used to generate data from Internally displaced persons.

The discussions mainly focussed on the influence of aid on economic strives of IDPs, the modalities and types of interventions given to displaced persons, whether migrants are attracted to locations based on volume and type of interventions, the need or otherwise of changing welfare strategy and the drive towards making displaced individuals and households self-reliant. Secondary data were also examined. Reports of humanitarian organisations such as the international office for Migration, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, State Emergency Management Agency and the National Emergency Management Agency were used to validate claims and support the outcomes of interviews and discussions. Respondents were identified using purposive and snowball sampling techniques where one stakeholder led to the next. One official each, from SEMA, CSO, Women Group and a community leader were identified and interviewed. The FGD with IDPs were conducted in two sessions with a group of eight stakeholders each. The composition was gender exclusive, where ta session for male and another for female respondents were conducted.

The data collected were transcribed, analysed thematically and presented in narratives. The questions raised during stakeholder interactions were used to streamline content into themes which was used to guide the presentation of findings. Although data were collected from stakeholders separately, their inputs were analysed in a way that sought for commonalities as categorisation was thematically determined. QDA Miner was used to support the analysis.

Findings

The findings of this study are structured in two sections. The first one presents the extent of welfare dependence of Internally Displaced Persons in Yobe State while the second one dwells on strategies being used to dissuade IDPs from aid-dependence and establish a welfare system that focus on self-reliance through self-sustaining livelihood interventions.

Welfare Dependence among Internally Displaced Persons in Yobe State

Stakeholder engagements show high level of welfare dependence among migrants as most of the displaced persons during FGD indicates food and cash interventions as their only source of supporting livelihoods. Households are having one to four sources from different organisations issuing either food or cash based interventions. Only six out of Seventeen IDPs revealed that they are making attempts to engage in productive activities to support their lives. Interviews with community leaders indicates even higher rates as a clergy opined "our religion (Islam) does not support laziness, but almost all of them are always waiting for charity. After you are supported with charity for a few years, you should have been able to support your live without it. Unfortunately, most, if not all of them are doing nothing except begging and waiting for aid." In a slightly different tune, A CSO official opined that "some of the beggars on the street are not IDPs they are vulnerable members of the host community but even the IDPs are not different, they are also highly dependent on charity. They wait for NGOs and government to provide support services and they feed on it. Even if they start businesses, they still depend on aid to feed their families because the businesses are not strong enough to support a family."

Regardless of community hosting of displaced persons in Yobe state, labour integration remains low at middle class and higher levels of engagement while low-skill, manual labour participation is relatively high in the state. However, even at the low-ebb of labour force participation, access to employment is at times restricted especially in unionised labour. An IDP disclosed during FGD that: "I attempted to be a porter sometimes back but after running after a lorry they told me that I do not belong to their association, and if I want to participate, I must register first and pay the prescribed registration dues. I could not afford all that at the time, so I had to quit." State his exact words This indicates that local labour integration of displaced persons remains difficult regardless of community hosting. It should be clarified however, that this shouldn't be misconstrued as discrimination against migrants but rather a manifestation of difficulty associated with labour integration especially in a unionised profession.

During the FGD displaced persons revealed that most of them are willing and ready to start business in their present places of residence but they do not have the starting capital to engage in any meaningful productive activity. When asked to access the governments' cash interventions, a significant number complained of politicisation and nepotism in accessing the intervention. A participant said "weare allocating slots to local politicians who in turn select relatives and associates for the grant, it is never a fair process. If you don't know anyone, you can't get anything from them." Hence this shows why welfare dependence is still high among displaced communities.

Segregating the data along demographic lines reveals that welfare dependence is higher among women and more prevalent among the older people as five out of the six IDPs that are productively engaged are men and the sixth one, a young woman. They also stated that women find it difficult to source starting capital which makes it necessary to resort to public aid as means of survival. Dependence among older women and men is understandably high due to age peculiarities that necessitates dependence. Another attribute that influences level of welfare dependence is the status of the family. Woman-headed households (widows and orphans) are more likely to rely on welfare packages than men-headed families because of the comparatively high propensity of men to be engaged in gainful employment.

It was also found that displaced persons change locations to places where there is concentration of donor activities primarily to access grants. Across Northeast Nigeria, migration movements were tracked by professional bodies such as IOM and UNOCHA. Within Yobe state, interviews reveal that migrants move to Damaturu, Gujba and Potiskum where most of the donor agencies concentrate their

activities.

From welfare dependence to self-reliance

There is a significant systemic change to address welfare dependence by focussing on cash based interventions and training to encourage start-up businesses and restore the capital of those who lost their businesses to the insurgency. Such initiatives usually involve a sequential arrangement of verifying recipients as truly vulnerable and capable of starting or continuing a productive activity, provision of training –usually on business and financial literacy; cash grant to provide the business life wire, and financial monitoring and extension services to guide and provide business advise. The verification is usually done to ensure selection of capable and willing candidates for the scheme while the provision of training was usually to expose candidates to the rudiments of productive activities and prepare their minds for the challenges they are bound to experience. Making the payment in tranches is a good way of keeping them on track because expectation of the next payday helps to control behaviour and ensure compliance with all conditions surrounding the grant especially through monitoring and evaluation of fund utilisation among beneficiaries. The UNDP is one of such organisations that is providing such cash grants through SEMA.

Another strategy adopted to achieve sustainable self-reliance among displaced communities is skill acquisition programmes that are targeted towards making migrants to contribute to the productivity of the communities they live in. The skill acquisition programmes usually focus on trades that are relevant in the hosting communities such as tailoring, carpentry, plumbing, electrical works, handset & laptop repairs, soap making, catering services, event organisation and management, hall and home decoration and the likes. Nongovernmental organisations like Arewa Development Support Initiative (ADSI), and some individual philanthropists engage in such kind of support services. “I was contacted by ADSI last week to choose a trade of my interest where I will be trained and I chose catering” remarked a female IDP in Damaturu.

Another strategy is influencing the mind set of IDPs through sermons on the pulpit. The clergy enjoin both IDPs and vulnerable members of the host communities to strive towards improving their lots emphasising abhorrence of depending on other while at the same time encourage the wealthy give alms to the needy in order to reduce inter class animosity in society. Qur’anic verses and stories of the prophet companions are used to drive the lessons home. Partnership between the government and the people is an effective strategy to mobilise and convince the vulnerable to stand on their feet and be productively engaged. Ideas coming from the pulpit are perceived as divine instructions that demand unconditional obedience.

To this end, having officially closed IDP camps since August 2017, Yobe state has an advantage of having 91% of its IDPs in host communities and only 9% living in camp-like structures. This is far ahead of Borno state with only 46% living with host communities and slightly lower that Adamawa state with 93%. It is noteworthy however, that Yobe hosts only 133,083 IDPs, while Borno and Adamawa states host 1,506,537 and 206,422 respectively.

However, even before the closure of official IDP Camps in Yobe state, a large number of displaced persons (107,562) settled in host communities(NEMA, 2016)and by August 2017, camps disappeared in the state which means virtually all IDPs in the state (113,014) reside in Host Communities(IOM, 2017).

Questions on the extent of welfare dependence among community based IDPs in Yobe state remains unanswered as well as state strategies on reducing dependence by emphasising sustainable strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper concludes that insurgency has a downtrodden effect as it results to massive

displacement of people from their original homes to other places that are relatively safe. Due to growing poverty in Yobe state, the non-governmental organisations have increased concern on the plights of the IDPs thereby providing them with both food and non-food items in addition to cash intervention periodically. Such gesture has adversely conditioned the minds of the IDPs by making them to be over-dependent on such aids. The recipient of donors became weakened psychologically that they abandoned other sources of eking out a living with a perceived guarantee that donations are always forthcoming, hence, perpetual reliance and dependence of aids from the donor agencies.

The study has found that most IDPs have turned to be beggars and dependent of such aids.

The study recommends inter alia, government's renewed concerns for empowerment through skill acquisition schemes to encourage self-reliance while attending to essential humanitarian needs of the IDPs.More so, government should focus more on addressing the menace of recurring insurgency in rural communities and also to deepen concerns towards rural development so as to encourage return of the IDPs to their original places of abode.

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