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"MIGRATION GOVERNANCE IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN: THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISPLACEMENT."

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Abstract
The Lake Chad Basin region, particularly the states of Yobe and Borno in Northeast Nigeria, stands at the intersection of profound environmental change and protracted violent conflict, creating a complex humanitarian crisis characterized by large-scale internal displacement.The Lake Chad region, straddling the borders of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, represents a critical nexus of complex humanitarian and environmental challenges. Characterized by protracted conflict, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, the region has witnessed significant internal and cross-border displacement. Compounding this precarious situation is the escalating impact of climate change, manifested in desertification, water scarcity, and erratic rainfall patterns, which further exacerbate vulnerabilities and potentially trigger or amplify displacement dynamics.The shrinking of Lake Chad, coupled with increasing desertification, drought, and other climate-related stressors, has severely impacted livelihoods dependent on natural resources, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities within communities. The main objective of this study is to critically analyze the existing migration governance frameworks in Yobe and Borno states, Northeast Nigeria, in the context of displacement driven by the intersection of climate change and conflict.Questionnaire surveys were administered to a broad sample of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to understand their experiences, vulnerabilities, and perceptions of migration governance mechanisms. In-depth interviews were conducted with experts in climate change and displacement. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with community leaders/representatives to explore their resilience strategies and perspectives on managing displacement within their communities. The study has among others; found that, the region is truly deeply in countless humanitarian challenges such as poverty, malnutrition and social abuses. The research recommended inter alia, the need for strengthening migration governance policies and practices in Yobe and Borno states respectively.

Keywords:-Climate change; Displacement; Governance; Lake chad; Migration.

1.0 Introduction

The Lake Chad Basin region, particularly the states of Yobe and Borno in Northeast Nigeria, stands at the intersection of profound environmental change and protracted violent conflict, creating a complex humanitarian crisis characterized by large-scale internal displacement.

As the planet faces unprecedented environmental changes, a profound yet largely unrecognized crisis is emerging: climate migration. Across the globe, millions of people are being compelled to leave their homes due to the devastating effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, severe droughts, and increasingly frequent natural disasters. Unlike traditional migration, which is often driven by economic or political factors, climate migration is primarily a survival strategy in response to environments that have become uninhabitable or too dangerous to live in (Cipollina et al., 2024; Daoust& Selby, 2024).

Despite its growing significance, climate migration remains a hidden crisis—overlooked in international policy and inadequately addressed by existing legal frameworks. Current global governance structures fail to account for the unique challenges faced by climate migrants, who often fall through the cracks of national and international protection systems (Żuk et al., 2024). This has led to a situation where millions are displaced without recognition or support, exacerbating existing inequalities and fueling potential conflicts.
One of the foundational texts in this field is Norman Myers' work on environmental refugees, which estimated that up to 200 million people could be displaced by environmental factors by 2050 (Myers, 2002). Myers' early predictions sparked significant debate and led to a proliferation of research on the topic. Subsequent studies have sought to refine these estimates, considering various scenarios of climate impact, migration patterns, and adaptive capacities of different regions (Castles, 2003). While Myers' estimates have been both supported and criticized, his work remains a critical starting point for understanding the scale of climate migration.

The shrinking of Lake Chad, coupled with increasing desertification, drought, and other climate-related stressors, has severely impacted livelihoods dependent on natural resources, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities within communities. This environmental degradation, occurring in a region already grappling with the devastating effects of the Boko Haram insurgency, has created a nexus where climate change acts as a threat multiplier, contributing to resource scarcity, inter-communal tensions, and ultimately, forced migration. Understanding how migration is governed in this intricate context is crucial for developing effective and sustainable solutions for the affected populations.

Understanding Climate Migration

Climate migration refers to the movement of individuals or communities driven primarily by climate-related environmental changes, such as rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity. Unlike economic or conflict-driven migration, climate migration often lacks agency, as people are forced to relocate due to environmental degradation rather than personal choice or economic ambition (IOM, 2024; Migration Policy Institute, 2023).

While national and subnational policies and institutional frameworks for migration governance exist in Nigeria, their capacity to address the specific challenges arising from the convergence of climate change and conflict-induced displacement in Yobe and Borno states remains a critical area of inquiry. Existing frameworks, often primarily focused on conflict-related displacement, may not adequately account for the unique vulnerabilities and needs of individuals and communities whose mobility is shaped by the intertwined impacts of environmental degradation and insecurity.

This research proposes to investigate the effectiveness of current migration governance mechanisms in Yobe and Borno states in addressing displacement driven by the intersection of climate change and conflict. It seeks to understand the experiences and perspectives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) regarding these mechanisms, while also exploring the knowledge and insights of experts in climate change and displacement, as well as the resilience strategies and traditional coping mechanisms utilized by community leaders. By employing a mixed research method approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities in governing migration within this complex humanitarian setting. Ultimately, this research intends to generate evidence-based recommendations for strengthening migration governance policies and practices to better

support and protect populations displaced by the combined effects of climate change and conflict in the Lake Chad Basin region of Northeast Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to critically analyze the existing migration governance frameworks in Yobe and Borno states, Northeast Nigeria, in the context of displacement driven by the intersection of climate change and conflict. While the specific objectives are:

i. To assess the experiences and perspectives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Yobe and Borno states regarding the current governance mechanisms for migration and displacement related to climate change and conflict.
ii. To examine the understanding and perspectives of experts in climate change on the impact of environmental degradation on human displacement and the adequacy of existing migration governance structures in addressing these impacts in the Lake Chad Basin.
iii. To investigate the resilience strategies and traditional coping mechanisms employed by communities in Yobe and Borno states in managing displacement resulting from the interplay of climate change and conflict.
iv. To evaluate the effectiveness of current national and sub-national policies and institutional frameworks in addressing the specific challenges of migration governance at the intersection of climate change and displacement in Northeast Nigeria.

To propose evidence-based recommendations for strengthening migration governance policies and practices in Yobe and Borno states to better respond to the needs of populations displaced by the combined effects of climate change and conflict.

Literature review

2.1 Internally Displaced Persons and Migration Governance in the Context of Climate Change and Conflict in Yobe and Borno States, Nigeria.

The protracted humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria, particularly in Yobe and Borno states, has resulted in widespread internal displacement, primarily driven by the Boko Haram insurgency. However, an increasing body of literature highlights the significant and often intertwined role of climate change in exacerbating vulnerability and contributing to displacement in this region Benjaminsen, T. A., Buhaug, H., Buseth, J. T., Smith, H. M., &Theisen, O. M. (2022).Bukar, A., Ibrahim, A., &Maina, G. (2021) in their review examines the existing scholarly work focusing on the experiences and perspectives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in these states regarding current migration governance mechanisms, specifically concerning displacement linked to the complex interplay of climate change and conflict. While a substantial amount of research has documented the drivers, patterns, and humanitarian consequences of conflict-induced displacement in Northeast Nigeria (e.g., IOM, 2023; UNHCR, 2024), literature specifically addressing IDPs' perspectives on migration governance mechanisms at the nexus of climate change and conflict remains relatively nascent.

Studies on conflict-induced displacement highlight the challenges faced by IDPs in accessing basic services, security, and durable solutions (Human Rights Watch, 2023; The Brookings Institution, 2024). These works often reveal IDPs' experiences of inadequate camp management, insufficient humanitarian assistance, and a lack of meaningful participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Their perspectives often reflect a desire for greater agency, security, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods (Adamu&Usman,

2020). Emerging research is beginning to explore the impact of climate change on displacement in the region. Declining agricultural productivity due to desertification, drought, and changes in rainfall patterns are identified as significant factors contributing to livelihood insecurity and forced migration, particularly among agrarian communities (Mohammed, A. A., &Usman, H. (2021) .These studies suggest that environmental degradation can act as a "threat multiplier," exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and potentially fueling conflict over scarce resources, thereby contributing to displacement (Smith & Jones, 2022).

These narratives frequently highlight the loss of livelihoods due to environmental changes, which makes them more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups or compels them to seek refuge elsewhere when conflict erupts.

2.2 Climate and Environmental Drivers of Migration and Their Implications for Displacement in the Lake Chad Region of Yobe and Borno States

The Lake Chad Basin, encompassing parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, is increasingly recognized as a hotspot for the intricate interplay between climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, and human mobility (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). This review delves into the recent academic literature examining the climate and environmental drivers of migration and their specific implications for displacement within the Nigerian states of Yobe and Borno, particularly in relation to existing migration governance mechanisms and the exacerbating influence of conflict.

A growing body of scholarship underscores the significant role of climate change and environmental degradation as key drivers of migration in the Lake Chad region (Adeloye et al., 2023; Fati& Umar, 2024). The shrinking of Lake Chad itself, largely attributed to climate variability and unsustainable water management practices, has drastically reduced access to water resources crucial for agriculture, fishing, and livestock rearing – the primary livelihoods of many communities in Yobe and Borno states (Boko& Ibrahim, 2022).

The consequences of these climate and environmental drivers are starkly evident in the high levels of internal displacement witnessed in Yobe and Borno states (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

2.3 Community Resilience Strategies and Traditional Coping Mechanisms in Managing Climate and Conflict induced Displacement in the Lake Chad Region of Yobe and Borno States

The complex humanitarian emergency in the region where the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation intersect with protracted violent conflict, is forcing the communities to adopt resilience strategies and traditional coping mechanisms (IPCC, 2022; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023). While formal migration governance mechanisms play a role in responding to this crisis, the resilience strategies and traditional coping mechanisms employed by affected communities are increasingly recognized as crucial for managing displacement and fostering local adaptation (Manyena, 2006).

2.4 National and Subnational Policies and Institutional Frameworks for Migration Governance in Yobe and Borno States.

Nigeria has established several national policies relevant to migration governance, most notably the **National Policy on Internal Displacement (NPID)**, adopted in 2020 (National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, 2020). This policy provides a comprehensive framework for the protection and assistance of IDPs, outlining the

roles and responsibilities of various government agencies and stakeholders. However, scholarly analysis suggests that while the NPID is a significant step forward, its implementation in the context of the Northeast, particularly concerning the climate-conflict nexus, faces considerable challenges (Amnesty International, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2022). These challenges include inadequate funding, weak coordination mechanisms among different levels of government and humanitarian actors, and a lack of specific provisions addressing the unique vulnerabilities of climate-displaced populations.

Discussion of the findings

This study found significant insights into the complex dynamics of migration governance within the Lake Chad Basin, specifically concerning the intersection of climate change and displacement in Yobe and Borno states. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives.

Firstly, the quantitative survey of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) provided a statistically significant understanding of their experiences with displacement, their perceptions of the adequacy and fairness of current migration governance mechanisms, and their awareness of the role of both climate change and conflict in their displacement. This data revealed specific challenges faced by IDPs in accessing essential services, protection, and information, and highlighted disparities in experiences based on factors such as location (camps vs. host communities) and perceived primary drivers of displacement. Furthermore, the survey revealed that, IDPs' preferred pathways for durable solutions and their levels of trust in existing governance structures is obvious.

Secondly, the in-depth interviews with experts in climate change and displacement provided nuanced and informed perspectives on the environmental drivers of migration in the Lake Chad region, the specific implications of these drivers for displacement in Yobe and Bornostates, and a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of current national and subnational policies and institutional frameworks in addressing this complex issue. Experts identified key gaps in existing governance mechanisms, particularly concerning the lack of specific policies addressing climate-induced displacement and the need for greater integration between climate change adaptation, conflict resolution, and migration management strategies.

Thirdly, the Focus Group Discussions with community leaders also revealed valuable insights into the resilience strategies and traditional coping mechanisms employed by communities in Yobe and Borno states to manage displacement resulting from the interplay of climate change and conflict. These discussions have uncovered local knowledge and practices that have historically been used to address environmental challenges and manage population movements, offering potential pathways for enhancing formal governance mechanisms. Furthermore, the perspectives of community leaders on the interaction between local practices and formal aid and governance structures have provided crucial information on how to foster more effective partnerships and culturally sensitive interventions.

Fourthly, the study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current national and subnational policies and institutional frameworks for migration governance in Yobe and Borno states. This analysis more so, identified specific policy gaps, institutional challenges, and areas for improving coordination and implementation. By examining the existing legal and policy landscape, the study pinpointed current frameworks as insufficient in addressing the unique vulnerabilities and needs of populations displaced by the intersection of climate change and conflict.

Conclusion

The regions in the Lake Chad Basin, particularly Yobe and Borno states in the North-eastern part of Nigeria, are facing a daunting and complex humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the intertwined impacts of climate change and violent conflict. This study investigated the existing migration governance frameworks and their effectiveness in addressing the displacement driven by the combined effects of environmental degradation especially desertification and desiccation of water bodies and instability in the region.

This study found significant displacement due largely to the complex dynamics of migration within the Lake Chad Basin, specifically concerning the intersection of climate change and dissipation of water bodies consequently. The displacement poses serious downtrodden consequences on people in Yobe and Borno states.

Recommendations

This research recommends for strengthening migration governance policies and practices in Yobe and Borno states. These recommendations were informed by the perspectives of IDPs, the expertise of professionals in the field, and the insights from community leaders, aiming to provide practical and contextually relevant solutions for better protecting and supporting populations displaced by the complex interplay of climate change and conflict in the Lake Chad Basin region.

The study also recommends for the need for more integrated and climate-sensitive migration governance frameworks, enhanced coordination among stakeholders, and the strengthening of local capacities and resilience strategies.

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