SURVIVING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NIGERIA: COPING STRATEGIES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDP) IN BENUE STATE, NORTHCENTRAL, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
For more than two decades now, farmers-herders' crisis have rendered more than 1.5 million people displaced, and several hundred maimed and killed. Although internally displaced persons remain the sole responsibility of Government, while CSOs gives helping hand, Government have failed to bring a lasting solution to the protracted war; relationship between CSOs and State have been described to be inchoate and adversarial leading to further failure in the role of complementarity expected to bring succour to the IDP. The IDP therefore remain in very inhabitable conditions, for which they have to, through resilience, design survival strategies for themselves as individuals, households and community. Although literature abound on IDP in Benue state, less has been done to theoretically and empirically foreground and document the means of survival by the internally displaced persons in the face of state fragility. It is this yawning gap this study intends to fill. The study argues that government and CSOs inchoate interventions have left the IDP with the option of fending for their needs; and this, have led to reducing sufferings, as well as lessening dependence on epileptic humanitarian aids; thereby enhancing and self-reliance. Drawing from the human needs theory, this study examines displacement and its impact on productivity, IDP needs, interventions and coping strategies. Qualitative approach was adopted to include primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral interviews; such as key informant interviews, and in-depth interviews; with the aid of unstructured interview guide. Secondary sources include published scholarly works. Collected data were qualitatively analysed, using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal CSOs and State inadequacies in meeting the basic needs of the IDP; this have made the IDP to resort to street begging, petty stealing in and

outside IDP camps; prostitution among aged women, adult ladies, teenagers and even children or minors; the study establishes that inadequate care to the IDP can lead to epidemics breakout, internal insecurity for the IDP and the community hosting them; thereby leading to environmental and community security threats. The study recommends skills development centres for IDP; actionable policies to end the crisis leading to displacement; and the need for all stakeholders to focus on sustainable development interventions, rather than just relief interventions.

Introduction

Human displacement is an increasing issue on a worldwide scale. Individuals impacted can be categorized into groups, with those forced to leave their countries being officially termed refugees, while those who remain within their home countries are referred to as 'internally displaced persons (Jeremy & Mooney 2007). The global population of such individuals has been increasing. Studies in 2022 revealed that internal displacement surged to almost 60 million individuals globally (IDMC 2022). As of the conclusion of 2021, the global number of internally displaced people was 59.1 million, including 53.2 million resulting from conflict and violence, and 5.9 million due to disasters (IDMC 2022). The UNHCR reported at the end of 2021 that 89.3 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, violence, and persecution, more than double the figure from a decade ago. This marks the highest number since World War II, highlighting a concerning trend of increasing displacement if conflicts persist unresolved. (UNHCR Report 2022).

In 2018, Africa had a record high of 16.8 million people were internally displaced due to conflict and violence, accounting for approximately 40% of the global total. Additionally, 2.6 million new displacements were caused by disasters, particularly hydro-meteorological hazards. The trend of increasing displacement is expected to continue in 2019, indicating that efforts to reduce this phenomenon have not been successful (IDMC 2019; AU-ECOSOCC, IDMC & NRC 2010). IDMC 2019 report further stated that conflict and violence are on the rise in numerous African countries, yet the displacement crises they provoke are often overlooked and the responses are inadequately funded. In Cameroon, conflicts in the Anglophone regions led to 20 times more displacement than the Boko Haram insurgency in 2018. Communal violence in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger has also contributed to displacement, both internally and across borders in 2016 and 2017. By mid-year 2019, displacement figures for Libya had already doubled compared to the entire year of 2018. Many of these crises are not new, emphasizing the urgent need for renewed efforts to address their root causes (IDMC, 2019).

Studies further reveals that in sub-Saharan Africa, internal displacement incurs costs exceeding $4 billion annually. Estimates indicate that the economic impact of displacement in this region results in an annual loss ranging from 0.1 to 11 percent of pre-crisis GDP in countries already facing economic challenges. The Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, and South Sudan experience the highest average annual economic impact compared to their pre-crisis GDP. These countries may struggle to manage these costs, which could undermine their national development and stability. Given Africa's potential for growth and socio-economic progress, addressing internal displacement is crucial (IDMC, 2019).

The Northeast and Central Nigeria have been two of the most devastated regions in Nigeria. Boko Harm terrorists, banditry, herder/farmer ecological violence, flooding, pockets of communal clashes, electoral violence, inter-ethnic, ethno-religious, and cultural conflicts have led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in form of displacement (Okpe, 2016, Ukase, 2020, Inyang & Effiong 2022). Government at different levels (Local, State and Federal) including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have continued to intervene in the management of the humanitarian crisis in northeast and north central Nigeria (Okpe 2006, Okolie & Atelhe 2014, UN, 2022, CSIS 2022). Benue, which is in the north central region, the population of internally displaced persons surge from 80,000 to close to 2,000,000 (two million) in 2022 (PUNCH, 1st April, 2022., HumAngle, 2022., Idowu 2022). The poor state of social provisioning by the CSOs and state, have left IDP with the option of fending for themselves.

Statement of Research Problem

Other pieces of literature have established that since 2010 herders have resorted to the use of arms to attacks on the people of Benue to gain access to resources best known to them, between 2010 and 2020 the group has rapaciously attacked, maimed, killed and displaced millions of people in Benue state (Wegh, 2018; Olugbenga, 2017; Abass 2012; Ahmed-Gamgam, 2018). The herdsmen in several attempts to justify their actions, have often come out to claim responsibilities for the heinous acts and killings; these nefarious activities have led to the rising profile of the herdsmen; as they rank among the most dangerous and dreaded terrorist groups globally (GTI, 2015). In addition to these attacks, communal and ethnic clashes; as well as ecological disasters also continue to threaten peaceful co-existence (Ajiye, 2018; Bello, 2016; Oravee 2015; Ajiye, 2018; Blench, 1994; Eromo, 2016; Nnoli, 1995).

In fact, the most devastating effects of this protracted war is that it has led to wanton loss of lives and properties. One of the sad incidences, among many others took place on 1st January, 2018 when the herders during a night raid, killed over 70 people in Guma Local Government Area of the state; by 2022, the farmers/herders clashes in addition to pockets of intra and inter-communal crisis have led to the death of over 10,000 people, with those narrowly escaping also sustaining varying dimensions of life threatening injuries requiring intensive medical care; these attacks have led to the displacement of villages and communities across Benue state (Inyang & Effiong 2022; Ameh 2018; Duru 2016; Egbuta 2018; Ukase & Jatto 2020). The displacement occasioned by the crisis have led to the emergence of IDPs camps; by April 2022, Benue state has become a home to 27 IDP camps, comprising of 6 official camps created by government and 21 unofficial camps created by the victims of the attacks in order to create a social welfare net for themselves (Iyang & Effiong, 2022; Usman 2023; IDMC 2022). The Ortom led government and Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) in lamenting the situation have also reported that the IDPs camps in Benue as at 2022 has become home to over 2 million IDPs and the number of those coming into the camps have continued to increase exponentially (Charles 2022; Duru, 2022).

In other strands of literature, scholars have established that the interventions of the state and civil society organisations have remained largely inchoate and disorganized (Inyang & Effiong 2022; Ameh 2018; Egbuta 2018; Terhemba, 2015; Ukase & Jatto 2020). However, none of these scholars were focused on how the IDP displayed self-reliance, and adopted survival strategies in such horrible conditions of poor social provisioning from the state-CSOs partnerships; Another study closely related to this study was carried out by Ekezie (2022), which focused on 'Resilience actions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in camp like settings: a Northern Nigeria case study', in which he reflects on the camp management and health resilience strategies of IDP in camp-like settings based on the first strategic objectives of the international organization for Migration (IOM) Progressive Resolutions of Displacement Solutions (PRDS). However, while Ekezie focused on the resilience mechanisms of the IDPs in Northern Nigeria as regards health management, less was done to empirically document coping strategies in terms of hunger, shelter, water, sanitation, etc; particularly in the selected locations for this study; which are Logo, Abagena, Naka, Agatu and Ichwa. This study is in furtherance of the scholarship already established by these scholars, such as Ukase and Jatto; Terhemba; Inyang and Effiong, and especially Ekezie on displacement, sufferings and resilience across IDP camps, and especially Benue state, by exploring the survival mechanisms the IDP have built through resilience to deal with hardship as individuals, households and community of people in order to drastically reduce dependence on relief materials from local and international CSOs, as well as build self-reliance and resilience in the face of humanitarian crisis.

It is based on this background that this study draws from the human needs theory to explores the medium of survival among IDP and its implication for IDP and community security; 2015-2023. Specific objectives are to (a) examine displacement and its impact on productivity; (b) IDP needs, interventions and coping strategies as well as (c) proffer recommendations.

Research Methodology

Data for this study were quantitatively collected, to include primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral interviews; conducted through unstructured interview guide; Key Informant Interviews (KII), In-depth Interviews and two three Focused Group Discussion (FGD) in Logo, Agata, Naka, Abegena, Ichwa and Dauda I, IDP camps, Benue state, Nigeria. Secondary sources include published scholarly works to corroborate oral accounts. The study combines descriptive statistics and analytical methods of data collection for analysis. As regards processes of data collection, 50 persons were interviewed in the course of this study; spread across 10 adults in each selected IDP camp; about 60% of respondents' female, in order

to balance gender gap; and also because women and children are the most vulnerable in times of humanitarian emergencies (Ekezie, 2022; Ukase and Jatto, 2022). The study ensured a high level of confidentiality, with participants opting to remain anonymous for security purposes. As a result, the respondents' names were not disclosed in the study, although the locations of the interviews were provided. This study emanated from one year of extensive field research in Benue, between April 2023- April, 2024.

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of this study is Benue state. The time scope is 2018-2023. The selected IDP camps are Logo, Agata, Naka, Abegena, Ichwa and Dauda I, IDP camps. These areas were selected because it covers the entire region of the state, ranging from Zone A-C, in order to give insights about the debilitating rate of displacement in the state as a result of the crisis. More also, the year, 2018-2023 was selected because it was the period that witnessed an exponential increase in the rate of the humanitarian crisis.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Clarification

The study is based on the Abraham Maslow's human needs theory, which suggests that unmet basic needs can lead individuals to engage in deviant behaviour within their social relationships (Pichère & Cadiat, 2015).

Diagram I: **Hierarchy of Human Needs Pyramid.**



Source: Pichère & Cadiat, (2015).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a motivational theory in psychology that comprises a five-tier model of human needs. These needs are often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid as shown in diagram one. a) Basic needs: These are the primary biological requirements essential for human survival, including air, food, water, shelter, clothing, warmth, intimacy, and rest. The most crucial need is the need for physical survival, which influences our actions. Once basic needs are satisfied, individuals progress to higher levels. (b) Security needs: Individuals desire structure, predictability, and influence in their lives. These needs can be met through family, community, and institutions such as law enforcement, schools, and healthcare. Examples include emotional well-being, financial stability, lawfulness, and freedom from anxiety. (c) Social and belonging needs: This level pertains to our emotional requirement for social connections, affiliation, bonding, and inclusion in a community. It involves experiencing a sense of fitting in. (d) Esteem needs: These needs relate to our wish for self-respect, confidence, accomplishment, acknowledgment from others, and admiration. This stage concerns feeling appreciated and esteemed by others; and lastly (e) Self-fulfillment needs: which involve creativity that leads to the full realization of one's capabilities.

The theory in this study would be used to capture the various needs of the IDP, such as primary healthcare, water, shelter for which they need humanitarian interventions. The study draws fron the human needs theory to how the IDP through the acts of resilience, as individuals, households and communities are meeting their own needs in the midst of CSPs-State failure; the study further probe how the adversarial relationship between the state and the CSOs, leading to poor interventions continues to thickens their skin towards self-reliance, as well as inter-dependence as a community of vulnerable people.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP): internally displaced individuals are those who escape their homes or usual living places for safety due to uncontrollable circumstances. The main distinguishing factor of internally displaced persons is that they remain within their country of origin. Internal displacement involves forcibly leaving one's village, community, or region because of conflict or natural calamities, relocating to a safer area within the same country (Mmahi 2016; Ekezie, 2022). The United Nations Guiding Principles on IDPs defines IDPs as individuals or groups who have been compelled to leave their homes or habitual residences, particularly to avoid the impacts of armed conflict, widespread violence, human rights abuses, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border (UNHCR, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2005; Ekezie, 2022). For example, people who fled their native homes across communities in Benue due to the destruction and attacks by Fulani herdsmen, flood and other forms of natural disasters, but still remain within the boundary of the state in official or unofficial camps due are referred to as internally displaced persons.

Humanitarian Crisis: This is described a humanitarian crisis as a scenario where there is a significant threat to human life, dignity, and well-being. She highlighted that such crises usually arise due to various factors like natural disasters, conflict, and political instability, and emphasized the severe consequences they can have on individuals, families, and communities (Thomas, 2014). On the other hand, (Macrae, 2002), a former head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, defined a humanitarian crisis as a situation where people struggle to access basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, healthcare, or protection. He pointed out that these crises are commonly triggered by natural disasters, conflict, and political instability, and stressed the profound impact they can have on individuals, families, and communities. In this study, humanitarian crisis refers to the various disasters, natural and man-made that has made people to flee their homes in search of safety.

Horrors of Displacement, IDP needs, Challenges and interventions

This section of the study explores the rate of displacement, and its impacts on the displaced people. In Benue, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic worsened the already precarious conditions of the IDPs in different parts of the state. There were about 27 IDP camps in the Benue State, Nigeria. Before the Covid-19, Benue state housed the largest number of IDPs in central Nigeria. Although, even before the outbreak of the covid-19, state government official continually lamented that government broke and unable to provide sufficient facilities for the IDPs. The governor of the state, Samuel Ortom once accused the former President Muhammadu Buhari of abandoning Benue IDPs to languish in hunger and diseases (WHO 2018, UNICEF 2018). In other words, COVID-19 led to social and economic displacement, which made many people to lose their means of livelihood.

Table A: Benue State Communities and Internal Displacement (Conflict Induced)

S/No.	Year	Number of Internally Displaced Persons
1.	2018	80,000
2.	2019	500,000
3.	**2020**	**600,000**
4.	**2021**	**650,000**
5.	**2022**	**1.5 million**
6.	2023	2 million

Source: Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), 2023.

As can be seen in table I above, the number of IDPs increased exponentially in Benue during the covid-19 years from 500,000 in 2019 to 650,000 in 2021. The figure reached its apogee in 2022 with 2 million internally displaced persons in different IDP camps. This surge in number of IDPs during the turbulent moment of Covid-19 pandemic created double tragedy for both the CSOs, government and IDP (SEMA, 2023). While government battled to prevent spread of the corona virus in IDPs and state, the IDPs themselves battled hunger and isolation. The Covid-19 pandemic and the surge in farmer-herder violence led to massive inflow of displaced persons into the camps, thereby worsening the precarious food and feeding conditions in the camps (SEMA, 2023, Ethnographic Survey, 2023). For instance, the Benue State government claimed it could no longer effectively feed the IDPs satisfactorily because of the shortfall in federal government revenue allocation and the increase in cost of feeding the IDPs (Ochogwu 2022).

In six IDP camps, with 10 persons as respondents in each of the selected camps, the study takes a look into the impact of displacement across communities. The table below shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the IDP in the study area. It showed how displacement have dislocated IDP from their families; means of livelihood and ancestral lands.

Table B: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of IDPs in the Study Area

		Logo (N=10)	**Daudu (N=10)**	**Agatu (N=10)**	**Naka (N=10)**	**Abagena (N=10)**	**Ichua (N=10)**	**All (N=60)**
Age (years)	<31	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	18
	31-40	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	16
	41-50	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	20
	51-60	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	5
	>60	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1
	Total	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**60**
Sex	Male	4 (40%)	8(80%)	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	31
	Female	6 (60%)	2(20%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	5 (50%)	6 (40%)	29
	Total	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**60**
Period in camp	<6 months	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	3
	6-12 months	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	6
	13-24 months	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	9 (90%)	0 (0%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	24
	25-36 months	4 (50%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	10 (100%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	21
	>36 months	3(30%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7
	Total	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**60**

Source: Field survey, 2023.

From table B above, the people on these camps are able bodied young men and women who should be working to contribute to the economic and political development of their communities. They have stayed in the IDPs camps for as much as two to six years; disconnected from their ancestral communities and occupations, totally dependent on relief materials for survival. This poses huge challenges for peasant farmers, agricultural development as a large percentage of them are farmers by occupation. This will eventually lead to the inflation of agricultural produce as well as food

insecurity. In addition, the continual stay of the IDPs in their various camps pose huge security challenge for host communities, as well as the possible outbreak of contagious diseases. More also, there is heavy burden on government and humanitarian organizations in their attempt to carter for them. Probably due to the overwhelming poor condition of those in camps, government and CSOs through their actions and inaction are not able to effectively carter for IDPs, leading to the worsening condition of those in camps. Other pieces of literature also corroborated these findings from the field; such as increasing level of hunger, starvation, and mal-nourishment (Ladan, 2012; Ukase & Jatto, 2020; UNHCR, 2019; Nsa, 2018; Okonkwo & Nomji 2021; Ohihoin et'al 2013).

In addition to facing forced displacement, most internally displaced persons (IDPs) encountered challenges such as residing in camps unrecognized by national authorities, limited access to essential resources, and the consequences of inadequate support. The primary health issues reported included headaches, eye infections, diarrhoea, fever, typhoid, and malaria. IDPs attributed some of these health problems to the large number of rodents and disease-carrying vectors on the camp premises, including mosquitoes, snakes, and scorpions. The bites from these vectors were linked to increased disease rates and deaths. Long-term well-being issues included trauma, stress, and loss of income. Supplies for the IDPs were insufficient, with food scarcity affecting their health and leading to speculated deaths. Consequently, it was not surprising to find that hunger was the most significant challenge across all camps, with one IDP noting that some deaths were due to starvation. According to a respondent in Naka.

> *We face the most harrowing of situations like disease prevalence, poor primary healthcare provisions, and acute hunger. In the past three months, we have lost more than 15 IDP. The food government and all of those organization are largely inadequate. Women and children even face more sorrow in this place (001 Respondent, Naka).*

In Ichwa,

> *This is Ichwa IDP camp, it has been labelled as an unofficial camp. Government claims ignorance of our existence. In fact, we only hear there is a government, their impact is not known nor felt here. We have received support, although inadequate, from local groups, a few international CSOs, individuals and Nigeria faith based organizations (002 Respondent, Ichwa).*

From findings, IDP in Ichwa, Naka, Anagena lack adequate toilet facilities, making majority to practice open defecation. Under the condition, environmental hygiene and sanitation is seen as luxury; and this has facilitated diseases like cholera, malaria, etc. In fact, everyone in the camp look sick, the worst hit seen were "women and children", who were reported by the camp manager to have mortality rates usually hitting the crescendo. The alarming vulnerability is based on the fact that they are more prone to falling ill, especially during childbirth for mothers and young ages of children, and the inability of women and children to cater food for themselves increased their vulnerability. Unaccompanied children, especially those orphaned by the crisis or those with no personal guardian in the camp, were also vulnerable to being exploited. The lack of men in any household spells more doom for the women and children, as they are also prone to all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) like rape, assaults and all kinds of risks.

Coping strategies of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue IDP Camp

In terms of primary healthcare provision, some camps like Agatu, Logo, and Naka had established a health support team to manage medical issues for the internally displaced persons (IDPs). Sick individuals were typically taken to see a medical doctor, often at distant facilities, who would then prescribe medications. These health services were available in most locations but often required direct financial payments as there were no insurance or subsidy schemes for the IDPs. In such cases, the IDPs usually supported each other financially. However, when their out-of-pocket expenses exceeded their budgets, they turned to alternative treatments such as traditional remedies like herbs or purchasing medicines from street vendors. The use of herbs and medications from street vendors was sometimes found to be ineffective, leading to inadequate treatment of the conditions experienced by the IDPs. Overall, financial constraints posed a significant challenge as the IDPs could not afford proper medical care, resorting instead to self-medication. They also noted that sometimes, because of the high cost of proper treatment, they go get concoctions from chemist stores with 50 or 100 naira, they just tell the chemist person to mix drugs for them (Field work 2023).

In camps like Ichwa, Médecins Sans Frontières have established a mini-clinic to carter to health issues like cholera, malaria, pneumonia, very serious sicknesses are said to be transferred to the specialist hospital in Benue; however, they are not

able to attend to the overwhelming conditions of sick people in the camp. They noted that one of the things that have escalated the health issues is rainfall. The IDP have no proper shelter, they constructed for themselves shelters made of sack (popularly known as cement bags); when the torrents of the rain become very high, the wind blows a lot of the sacks away, leaving them at the mercies of the heavy downpour.

A respondent noted:

> *Aside the fact that we do not have access to quality medical attention, we are faced with the challenges of shelter. When it rains, sometimes most of our properties are washed away by the rain. The rain further exposes us to very dangerous reptiles, which are also looking for places to hide. A lot of us have suffered from scorpions and snake's bite. The way we cope is that we usually go out to buy more sack bags, and also reptile repellent chemicals. However, these self-help measures are never enough, we want to return to our homes (003 Respondent).*

According to Nurse, who is humanitarian worker with a well-known international organization, at the Ichwa IDP camp:

> *Lack of shelter, and adequate food make nonsense of our medical interventions. You need food to take drugs, you need shelter to rest and recuperate well. In situations where there is no shelter, and the IDP are constantly exposed to the intense cold and rainfall, even if they get treatment, the sickness will become protracted, and even lead to death. The self-treatment they expose themselves to a lot of times further magnify their health challenges (004 Respondent).*

To deal with the challenges of food and healthcare shortages, some IDP leaders advised camp residents to generate income through activities like farming and selling firewood. When external support groups provided food to the IDP community, resources were distributed based on the amount supplied, number of households, or family size. Certain camps used specific food rations for fair distribution, often relying on household information to guide the process. Formal camps with government or humanitarian organization supplies commonly used standard protocols. However, these supplies were often inadequate, leading to below-par nutrition, malnutrition, weakened immunity, and increased begging among IDPs due to the gaps between distributions.

An IDP noted:

> *We go street begging, sell firewood, hawk sachet water, groundnut, beg community elders to give us land to do petty farming. Sometimes they give, some other times they refuse. A lot of young people are also involved in social vices, like stealing from members of the community, as well as from IDP. Unfortunately, our young ladies are also involved in prostitutions and other illegal activities (005 Respondent, Naka).*

As stated in the human needs theory, when certain basic needs are not provided, there is a probability for humans to become deviant. We can establish from the above that people who will normally not steal or engage in prostitution began to involve themselves in those anti-social behaviours, just to ensure survival.

Table C. Coping Strategies of IDPs in Benue, Northcentral Nigeria

S/No.	Children	Women	Men	Aged and Sick
1	Street vending, fishing, bricklaying, begging, house cleaning services, support from CSOs focusing on Children; communal living	Petty retailing, farming, hawking, house clearing and cleaning services,	Wood-work, such as Carpentry, farming, bricklaying,	Children, relatives, alms begging and support from faith based

	among members of the IDP community, etc	construction site works, saloon business, support from relatives and friends, commercial sex activities; CSOs focusing on women, communal living among members of IDP community, etc.	barbing, commercial transport services (bus drivers, conductors, motorcycle riders), auto-repairing (mechanic), support from relatives and friends, as well as communal living among members of the IDP community etc.	organizations and public spirited individuals; as well as communal living among members of the IDP community, etc.

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Recommendation

Based on the fore-going, the study recommends the following:

i. Before displacement, IDP apart from being farmers are skilled artisans, carpenters, painters, traditional cloth and basket weavers, cobblers, specialization in the usage of herbs, teachers, etc. rather than camping the IDP to continually depend on CSOs and the state for relief materials for survival, upon displacement, the state should establish means of getting soft loans for women especially, to begin small and medium businesses, establish vocational centres in the camp for the IDP to learn new skills like barbing, carpentry and others. Also employ other IDP knowledgeable in those skills to teach other IDP. This way of intentional skills development will entrench in the IDP the strength for self-sustainability and reliance even after departing the IDP camps.

ii. CSOs and state partnerships should be focused on strategies that can enhance development goals for the IDP, rather than relief interventions alone. Such focus could involve the strengthening of security measures, and long term projects that could continually enhance sustainable developments.

iii. More also, government at the federal, state and local levels should embrace partnerships that could see to the end of the protracted farmers'/herders' crisis that have led to the displacement, maiming and killing of thousands of people across the north central region. From the findings of the fieldwork, IDP are desperate to return home. It is necessary for the federal government and relevant stakeholders to expedite actionable plans for them to be reintegrated into the society.

Conclusion

This study draws from the human needs theory to examine the coping strategies of the IDP as individuals, households and community as a result of the failure of the state and CSOs in social provisioning. In fact, in some instances the state and civil society organizations partnership have been

reported to be adversarial. Individually, the IDP have resorted to doing all kinds of menial jobs, street vending or hawking, brick laying and so on, to be able to carter for their needs. Also, a few miscreants among them have resorted to petty stealing and prostitution for survival. In addition, households ensured that they look after themselves, especially their young ones, although, oral account stated that households with presence of males are likely to receive more protection, especially against Gender Based Violence (GBV); as a community, the IDP have maintained a united front in caring for one another, donating little stipends for treating each other in worse conditions, accommodating unaccompanied children, and many ways than expected, morale boosters to themselves. This interconnectedness, creates a sense of love and belonging. Philanthropy between IDP have created a strong bond of family. Biological family members and friends have also built a system of informal philanthropy, where they come to visit and donate once in a while. It was obvious the hierarchy of human needs through in relation to love, self-esteem and the need to belong were also fulfilled as a result of the communal lifestyle in the IDP camps.

Faith based organizations are also not left out, as they come from time to time to evangelize and also donate to the IDP. All of these acts of labour and philanthropy have helped to encourage self-reliance and drastically reduced excessive dependency on relief materials from local and international humanitarian organisations which seldom satisfy the teeming population in the IDP camp. The study established that inadequate care to the IDP will lead to health crisis, such as epidemics outbreak, internal insecurity for the IDPs and the community hosting the IDP; thereby leading to environmental and community security threats.

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