



Kpakpando Journal of History and International Studies

Lived Experiences and the Challenge of Security and Governance among the Internally Displaced Persons in the Geo-Sciences Camp, Jos South LGA: The Need for Technology

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Abstract

Social justice, security, rule of law and good governance are essentialities for national development. In the most recent decades, various scientific inventions in transportation, weaponry, information and communication technology (ICT) inter alia have contributed significantly in improving security and enhancing social justice, rule of law and good governance. However, the experience of vulnerable groups particularly displaced persons regarding security and their perception of social justice, rule of law and good governance is always dire. This study interrogates the lived experiences of displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP Camp, Zawan, Jos South LGA of Plateau State on the above; and the contributions of science and technology in mitigating some of the issues. This is a qualitative study which utilized both primary and secondary data utilized in the study include: oral interviews with some of the IDPs and camp leaders, reports by various organizations, observations, pictures inter alia. The secondary data utilized in the study include: published books, journals and articles sourced electronically and in the libraries. The study revealed that the displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP Camp were exposed to inhuman conditions of insecurity; they had a negative perception of rule of law, social justice and good governance. Findings further revealed that the use of technology can significantly improve the situation so that the displaced persons are not completely alienated. It was therefore, recommended that technology could be leveraged to improve on the security of the displaced persons at the IDPs camps, as well as create an atmosphere and feeling of social justice and good governance.

Keywords: Social Justice, Security, Rule of Law, Good Governance, Technology, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Kpakpando Journal of History and International Studies: Vol. 1 no. 4 July, 2024. ISSN: 2437-1750

Introduction

The phenomenon of internally displaced persons alternatively referred to as IDPs and the realities of managing such issues is a global concern which has attracted significant scholarship in recent decades. It is a global phenomenon as it is experienced in different continents and regions of the world transcending South America, Asia, Europe and Africa. This phenomenon is mostly caused by conflicts, natural or artificial disasters.ⁱ Since the turn of the century, there has been a significant rise in the issues of internally displaced persons. Andrew Solomon reported that by 2008, approximately 42 million people were displaced due to issues related to conflict, violence and human rights violation or threats of it; of this total figure, 16 million constituted the global refugee population while 26 million were IDPs displaced within their countries. African countries accounted for a bulk of the IDPs as over 11.6 million were displaced in the African countries of Sudan, Congo, Somalia and Nigeria inter alia.ⁱⁱ According to a Congressional Research Service Report, 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced since October, 2023.ⁱⁱⁱ Regardless of the country, IDPs endure inhuman conditions and human rights

violations. Women and children suffered the most during these situations as they lacked the resilience to deal with the realities. In most cases, women became widows and children, orphans.

In Nigeria, there are over 3 million displaced persons. The central and northern regions have the highest rate of displaced persons.^{iv} These displacements were caused by the phenomenon of the farmer pastoralist conflicts. The episodes of the violent conflicts have adversely impacted communities and individuals in these regions albeit the menace has been experienced in the south in recent years. The adverse damages resulting from the farmer pastoralist conflict has been adequately documented by different scholars and organizations. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) ranked the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest militant group globally in 2015, even ahead of the Boko Haram terrorist sect;^v by 2017, the International Crisis Group (ICG) attributed 3,641 deaths to the farmer-pastoralist conflict in central Nigeria.^{vi}

Plateau State (along with other central Nigerian states: Nasarawa, Kogi and Benue states) is among the most affected by the phenomenon of the farmer pastoralist conflict. Bassa, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Jos

South, Bokkos and Mangu LGAs have been the most affected LGAs. The loss of lives and properties is one out of the many negative fall outs of these violent attacks. Joseph Okwesili Nkwede highlighted some of the impact of these violent attacks.^{vii} He reported that in October 2017, there was an attack on Nkiye Donhoro village of Bassa LGA which resulted in the death of 26 people with houses and properties burnt. Similar episodes were recorded in March 2018 in Miango District and Kwall districts, Bassa LGA of Plateau State. The Dogo Nahawa attacks of March 2010 ransacked an entire community leaving over 500 people death and more than 3000 people displaced.^{viii} Since houses were burned during the attacks, the issues of displacements and how to handle the displaced persons has been a major issue. In most cases, post conflict, the displaced persons escaped with nothing and had to seek shelter in any available government property ranging from government schools, stadia or community hall away from the red zone.

Despite numerous extant frameworks such as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), United Nations Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement; Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Kampala Conventions of 2009^{ix} and the Constitution of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria protecting the socio-economic and human rights of the displaced persons, their experiences in displaced persons camps are always dire. The rights of displaced persons in the aforementioned frameworks include: right to security; right to equality as members of the society; right to life; right to property; right to dignity of a human person inter alia.^x However, as Lucy Hovil asserts, most displaced persons lose these rights as soon as they are displaced.^{xi} The displaced persons, due to their experience, did not have any sense of security and felt alienated from the wider society in terms of good governance, social justice and rule of law. There is a general sense of indignation among displaced persons and a feeling that they were not treated fairly by society and government.

An experience of this phenomenon of displaced persons in Jos South LGA of Plateau State followed the June 2018 attacks on Gashish District of Barkin Ladi. Thousands of displaced persons occupied the Nigerian Institute of Mining and Geo-Sciences (NIMGS) Hall, Zawan, Jos South LGA which is the primary concern of this study. The study seeks to answer questions such as:

1. What was the perception of the displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP camp on good governance, rule of law and social justice?
2. What was their experience of security?
3. How can technology be used to mitigate their perceived challenges?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine [delete- is paper primarily accounts for] the security experience of displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP Camp and their perceptions of social justices, and rule of law. In specific terms the study seeks to:

1. Assess the perception of the displaced persons at Geo-Science IDP Camp, Zawan, Jos South LGA on issues of good governance, rule of law and social justice.
2. Analyze the security experience of the IDPs at the camp.
3. Identify means by which science and technology can [be used to] mitigate their perceived challenges

Clarification of Key Concepts

Internally Displaced Persons

There has been no consensus among security scholars on a single conception of internally displaced persons. Scholars have perceived the term as using variety of lens. J.O Ezeanokwasa conceived IDPs as a phenomenon that uproots people from their social, economic, cultural and educational environment thereby making them homeless wonderers in their own country. This situation, Ezeanokwasa adds, comes with a lot of hardship.^{xii} However, the conception provided by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement suffices. The UN Guiding Principles aptly conceives internally displaced persons as:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence; in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, natural or human – made disaster and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.^{xiii}

The above conceptions issued by the United Nations Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement and Ezeanokwasa et al. aptly depict displaced persons in the context of this

current study. The displaced persons at the Geo-Science IDPs camp were forcefully removed from their habitual residence (the communities) which adversely affected their communal, social and economic life. The displaced persons fled their communities in order to avoid the attacks.

Security

The concept of security has evolved in recent years to encompass not just the traditional sense but also the conventional sense. In other words, security does not merely denote the safety of a country and its armed forces in the contemporary period. The new conception of security under the human security framework was first published in the UNDP reports of 1994.^{xiv} Security, in the conventional sense entails the safety of the communal living; sources of food; personal safety; health, economic wellbeing inter alia of people. These parameters of measuring security of individuals are sub-divided into the seven components of human security: communal security; health security; personal security; economic security; political security; environmental security and food security.^{xv} In the subsequent sections of this study below, these seven components are deployed in analyzing the perspectives of

displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP camp on security.

Social Justice

The concept of social justice is a relatively new concept. The origin of the concept of social justice may be traced to two important frameworks: the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 and the Programme of Action Adopted by World Summit for Social Development also in 1995.^{xvi} Like many contemporary concepts, there is no unanimous conception of social justice. At best, the concept denotes equality in distribution of the basic amenities of life. According to the International Forum for Social Justice, the concept of social justice denotes equality among all people in terms of distribution of resources, living conditions, income and freedom of all people from all forms of extreme poverty.^{xvii} The idea of social justice emphasizes that all people are free from poverty and that poverty is violation of the fundamental rights of people. Social justice is a condition where all people have access to services, benefits and personal security.^{xviii} Thomas Ehrlich re-echoed this conception in his 'Civic Responsibility and Higher Education'.^{xix} Ehrlich adds that social justice also encompasses issues related to rights of citizens, opportunities and fairness. Ehrlich's

conception of social justice is adopted in this current study and lays groundwork for analysis of the perception of IDPs regarding social justice.

Rule of Law

Rule of law, unlike the concepts above, is not a contemporary concept. The concept was first used by French Philosopher, A.V Dicey in 1769 to denote equality of all citizens before the law. The concept of rule of law has since evolved. M. Aghast submits that rule of law denotes limited power of government and its organs and the fundamental rights of all citizens.^{xx} Rule of law protects citizens from the government's abuse of powers.

Concept of Good Governance

The concept of good governance is one of the most deployed concepts in development literature. The concept is a relative term and scholars consider different parameters in conceptualizing the concept based on their socialization and the conditions of their country. Good governance is a very important concept because it is essential in the development of third world countries.^{xxi} We adopt Linda Levy Peck's idea of good governance. Peck perceived good governance as a government which is participatory; consensus oriented; inclusive;

effective and efficient; responsive; follows the rule of law; minimal corruption and which considers vulnerable groups in its decision making.^{xxii} Our aim is to examine how the displaced persons at Geo-Sciences IDP Camp experienced good governance and their perception of good governance.

The Geo-Sciences IDP Camp, Zawan and the IDPs

For the purpose of this study, IDP camp is deployed to mean a make-shift settlement established as a temporary shelter for and sometimes by individuals who have been displaced by conditions or threat of violence, natural disasters or human rights abuses. These camps are mostly established within countries of origin of the displaced persons and should not to be confused with refugee camps (established outside the country of origin of the displaced persons). The Geo Science Camp was established on the 23rd of June, 2018. The displaced persons established a mini community away from their original communities following attacks on villages of Gashish District of Barkin Ladi LGA: Kura Berom, Kuzeng, Tiseng, Gindin Akwati, Runku, Nghar and Kakuyuk, Yelwa, Zargom, Soy to mention a few on 22nd June 2018. The attack left over 400 people dead.^{xxiii}

The IDP camp which was situated at the Nigerian Institute for Mining and Geo-Sciences (NIMGS) Zawan, Jos – South LGA of Plateau State housed over 1,116 children and 1,821 women living together and sleeping on the floor of the main hall. In total, there were over 3,526 IDPs at the camp^{xxiv}. A community was established at this camp. There were 12 toilets constructed by the international committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Nigeria, 6 were allocated to the male folks while 6 to the female folk. There were officials on the camp: the Camp Leader, Francis Chung Ruwas; the Kitchen Leader and Camp Welfare Secretary. They survived on donations made by international non-governmental organizations (INGOs); non-governmental organization (NGOS); National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA); philanthropist and the host community. The camp existed between June 2018 to December 2019 when the displaced persons were issued a quit notice to vacate the premises of the NIMGS before 31st December, 2019.^{xxv}. The experiences of the IDPs are discussed under the following key sub-headings.

Geo-Sciences IDPS and Security Experience

The concept of security has evolved in recent years to encompass not just the traditional sense but also the conventional sense. In order words, security does not merely denote the safety of a country and its armed forces in the contemporary period. It is pertinent to gauge perception of the displaced persons using the lens of the seven components of human security mentioned earlier in the conceptual clarification. After evaluating the situation and the lived experiences of displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDP Camp, it is safe to assert that the IDPs never felt any sense of security. Using the above parameters, the IDPs lost every sense of their security. Due to the conflicts, the IDPs were forcefully ejected from their communities and families were broken due to the death of some members of the family. This was the case of Asabe Ali, a 72 years old widow who loss her husband during the attacks among a plethora of other cases.^{xxvi} In this case, as in many other similar cases, the communal security of the IDPs was affected. The communal activities and cultural practices of the displaced persons could not continue.^{xxvii} The foodstuffs of the IDPs were burned down and their nutritional condition was quite dire. As the camp leader, Friday Chong asserts, the IDPs could only feed once a day because of

the food.^{xxviii} Farmlands were destroyed which affected the food security of the people. The IDPs could not eat the diet they wanted and mostly only depended on what they could get. The destruction of farmlands and the inability of the IDPs to get to their farmlands greatly affected the economic security of the people. The IDPs could not engage in their daily activities and literally became beggars.^{xxix}

The IDPs lost their political security as they could not participate in the political activities leading to the 2019 general elections. In other words, as Dalyop Zacharia enthused, the people could not campaign or actively participate in the politicking process.^{xxx} The civic rights of the people were greatly violated. This political indignation was manifested when the IDPs pelted the Governor's car during his visit to them. The health security of the IDPs was adversely impacted. The IDPs faced appalling health conditions due to the condition of the camp. Men were made to sleep at the bar while women and children slept in the main hall.^{xxxi} The IDPs slept on the mats or on the bare floor. The congestion in the camps caused communicable diseases to spread easily. Diseases such as malaria, typhoid, among other diseases were widespread. There was

no health facility on the camp. The personal security of the IDPs was impacted. Some IDPs died in the camp while there were reports of rape and sexual abuse by security personnel on the camp. The environmental condition was unhealthy because of the poor hygiene caused by open defecation and over-congestion. The security situation was described by Marie-Theresa as "horror".^{xxxii} The IDPs were living in perpetual fear and unease.

Geo-Science IDPS and Social Justice

Social justice may be conceived as a situation whereby individuals and groups perceive fairness and equity in the dealings of government; particularly in the distribution of resources and opportunities. This is perceived in light of the state's management and distribution of resources in such a manner that all individuals are carried along in the process^{xxxiii}. In lieu of this conception, the IDPs at geo-sciences IDP camp had a very negative perspective of social justice caused by their experiences. The displaced persons felt alienated from the wider society and neglected by the government.^{xxxiv} The IDPs were pushed into poverty and they only enjoyed marginal opportunities in the camps. According to Ngo Lucy Dung, who was an IDP, they did not experience social justice

because they were not protected in their communities. When they camped at the Geo-Sciences camp, assailants took over their farmlands while they lived in abject poverty. The IDPs had a negative view of social justice as they had no opportunities while at the camp. The government, according to Gyang Thomas, neglected their economic, health, communal, personal and environmental needs and instead turned a blind eye towards their plight.^{xxxv} The displaced out of school children could not attend school on the camps as a result of the conflicts.

Geo-Science IDPS and Good Governance

As iterated above, good governance is a government which is participatory; consensus oriented; inclusive; effective and efficient and most especially considers the plight of displaced persons. The displaced persons at the Geo-Science IDP camp felt neglected by the government. Their belief was that the government did not care about their wellbeing. In an interview with Anita Gyang, a former IDP at the Geo-Sciences camp, she stated that the government did not show good leadership as government neglected them.^{xxxvi} This perspective was held by most IDPs in the camp because of the inability of the government to provide the

basic needs of the people on the camp which subjected them to harsh conditions such as hunger, malnutrition, harsh weather inter alia. The IDPs felt the government failed in guaranteeing their security; that the government was not transparent and did not consider their plight. The responsiveness of the government was also questioned as it took the government more than a month before they visited the camp. This view was manifested when the IDPs defiantly rejected the relief materials presented by the Governor Simon Bako Lalong when he visited the camp. The Governor's car was pelted with stones by the IDPs. The gesture was symbolic, because it signified a rejection of government by the IDPs. The IDPS suspected government's complicity in the attacks and biasness.^{xxxvii} There was a lack of transparency on the part of the government as the IDPs were left in the dark as to the government's plans.

Geo-Sciences IDPs and Rule of Law

The concept of rule of law denotes the equality of all individuals in a state^{xxxviii}. The displaced persons, being citizens of the Nigerian state deserved all rights and privileges enjoyed by other citizens. Such privileges include: right to life, right to freedom of association; right to economic

fulfillment and right to dignity of human person inter alia. Such rights are provided for in both local and international frameworks. The experience of displaced persons was however different. In other words, the reality of the IDPs was quite different. The IDPs at Geo-Sciences IDP camp did not enjoy equal rights as members of the wider society. They felt the government exercised high-handedness in issuing a quit notice to them to vacate the site before 31st December, 2019.^{xxxix} There were certain things the IDPs were subjected to: movement in camp was regulated, their purchasing power was limited and they were oppressed by the security in most cases. Their right to dignity of human person was also violated as they were ordered out of the camp by the Nigerian Institute of Mining and Geo-Sciences in December 2019. Some of the displaced persons became stranded as they had nowhere to go.

Science and Technology as a Panacea

A cardinal aim of this study is to interrogate how science and technology could mitigate the challenges of displaced persons. A discourse on the perspectives and experiences of displaced persons was provided in the previous sections. Hereunder, we consider how science and technology can

help correct such negative situation or conditions of IDPs.

As highlighted above, during periods of conflict and establishment of IDP camps, families are separated and can hardly keep in touch with their loved ones. This generally leads to a feeling of indignation, stress and further resentment of government.^{xl} Science and technology can be helpful in this regard; the stakeholders can work in ensuring that there is mobile connectivity in the camps with such gadgets as – telephone, Wi-Fi, data inter alia to enable the IDPs stay in touch with their family members. This will go along way in ameliorating their sufferings.

Science and technology can help improve the condition of the IDPs in terms of education. In the case of IDPs at Geo-sciences Camp, Zawan, over 1,000 children were rendered out of school in the wake of the attacks. They could not access education in the camps which contributed to their negative perception of social justice and bad governance. Seven-year old Joshua Jeol and Jerry Yohanna, a 17 year-old Senior Secondary Two (SS2) student are few of the pupils forced to drop out from school. These children were between ages 4 – 18 years. With science and technology deployed, the displaced children could access education

remotely through digital classes on platforms such as zoom and or face time, radio, televisions and many other technological means, by so doing education can be provided for the displaced persons.^{xli}

Technology and sciences can also come in handy in the identity management of displaced persons. In cases of the conflict and attacks, the credentials of the displaced persons are mostly burned during the attacks. In this situation, the use of digital tools particularly the bio-metric capturing devices would help in registering the displaced persons at the camps and also keeping track of camp population. With this, the government can adequately prepare and coordinate relief efforts aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the displaced persons. This would also help in knowing who is who in the camp. Most relief efforts lack transparency because the total numbers of IDPs in camp is not known. With proper management of identity using digital tools, banks can provide credit facilities to the displaced persons because recovering credit facilities to the displaced persons will become less tedious.^{xlii} The distribution of relief materials is easier with proper identity management, and technology can be leveraged in this case.

Science and technology can help in mitigating the plight of displaced person through research. With research tools such as Nvivo, Ascend and numerous others, researchers can collect, analyze and evaluate data on the needs and conditions of displaced persons. With digital tools, it is easy to identify the demographic and socio-economic needs of the displace persons. These devices can help in collecting data on the needs of the displaced persons and what the government should do.^{xliii} Furthermore, with digital tools such as drones, it is easier to secure the camps and monitor the situation of the sacked communities remotely.

The health of displaced persons can be improved by technology and science. First, technology can be used in collecting medical data of the displaced persons. With digital tools such as computers and mobile devices, the medical records of the IDPs would be intact. This would be helpful in the diagnosis and prescriptions in times of ailments. The availability of electricity in the IDP camps would be helpful in providing amenities such as drinking water and hot showers to the IDPs. The condition of displaced persons at the Geo-science camp was appalling as there was initially no drinking water and the IDPs took their bath with cold water. The

deployment of technology can help in making the displaced persons feel included and minimize alienation, particularly in civic duties such as elections registration. By leveraging science and technology, the government can provide IDPs with updates on the programmes and policies of government. That way, the government will not leave the displaced persons in the dark. With the identity of displaced persons well covered using digital tools, the displaced persons can vote remotely from the camps which will prevent the issues of disenfranchisement of displaced persons. With technology adopted, the displaced persons will retain their political powers.

In sum, the displaced persons' condition can be positively influenced if technology is leveraged upon. Since the displaced persons do establish a mini-community outside their original communities during periods of displacement, technology could be deployed to make them feel less alienated and to minimize their sufferings and pains. As discussed above, the role of technology when deployed properly in giving displaced persons human conditions cannot be overstated.

Recommendations

Having examined the plight of the displaced persons and the prospects of technology in solving some of the issues, hereunder, we make the following recommendations:

1. Government and other key stakeholders should prioritize the education of displaced persons in areas of digital technology so as to make the camp experience less stressful.
2. The government should prioritize the purchase of digital gadgets on the camps and encourage the displaced persons to use it.
3. Through the digital devices provided on the camps, the government should provide a tool for listening to and attending to the complaints of the displaced persons.
4. Government can utilize science and technology to organize digital classes for displaced school children on the camps.
5. Technology can be utilized in provision of certain amenities on the IDPs camps such as: the provision of make-shift tents for families; the

provision of safe drinking water and the management of the health of the IDPs.

6. Through the digital trainings provided to the displaced persons on the IDP camps, the government can improve on the employability of the displaced persons for the post-camp experience. Implicitly, if the displaced persons learn digital skills, they could have employable skills.

Conclusion

This study generally examined the condition of internally displaced persons in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the displaced persons at the Geo-Sciences IDPs Camp, Zawan, Jos South LGA of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study reconstructed the lived experiences of the displaced persons and explored their perspectives on issues of good governance, security, rule of law and social justice. We revealed in the study that the displaced persons had a very

negative perspective of the above due to their experiences on the camp. The displaced persons, in summary, had a negative perception of good governance; did not feel secured; did not enjoy social justice and rule of law. We argued that if technology is leveraged upon, the government, displaced persons and other stakeholders will benefit in the long run. For the displaced persons, we contend that the utilization of technology in the camp will make their living conditions much better in terms of health, education, amenities and their civic rights inter alia. This, we emphasized, could change their perception of the government and society in general which would be beneficial to the government. With a changed view of government among the IDPs, the government enjoys more legitimacy and goodwill of the people. We ultimately recommended more digitalization of IDP camps.

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xlii Oral Interview, Philip Hyang, Interviewed in Tudun Wada Jos on 10th February, 2024

xliii Oral Interview, Philip Hyang, Interviewed in Tudun Wada Jos on 10th February, 2024

Appendix

Oral Interviews Table

| S/N | Name of informant | Occupation | Age | Place of interview (all in Jos) | Date |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Asabe Ali | Displaced Farmer | 64 | IDP Camp, Zawan | 6-12-2018 |
| 2. | Dalyop Zacharia | Civil Servant | 55 | Kabong | 15-2-2024 |
| 3. | Dinatu Gyang | Farmer | 51 | Hwolshe | 12-2-2024 |
| 4. | Lucy Dung | Student | 38 | Hwolshe | 10-2-2024 |
| 5. | Gyang Thomas | Teacher | 46 | Bukuru | 9-2-2024 |
| 6. | Anita Gyang | Farmer | 49 | Bukuru | 15-2-2024 |
| 7. | Nora Chung | Civil Servant | 60 | Rayfield | 10-2-2024 |
| 8. | Philip Hyang | Civil Servant | 52 | Tudun Wada | 10-2-2024 |