

Assessment of the National Emergency Management Agency Intervention and the Management of Abuja Municipal Area Council Internally Displaced Persons Camps

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Abstract

The camp for internally displaced people has come to represent discomfort, anguish, and suffering. The news of multiple donations made by the government and other individuals contradicts the pleas and complaints made by the displaced, despite the facilities challenges in these camps, which primarily focus on housing, security, health care, and educational facilities. It is expected that the facilities announced to be provided for them should be able to care for the displaced during their period of displacement. With a broad focus, this study examined the management of internally displaced persons' camps in the federal capital area of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) and the Federal Government's engagement through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The survey design was descriptive. The principal source of data was an interview guide. The results demonstrated that NEMA pays little to no attention to the IDP situation in AMAC because the camps were only established by the displaced individuals themselves, and the situation has made it difficult for NEMA to manage and intervene effectively. This has a negative impact on NEMA's intervention in the IDPs' access to housing, food, safety and security, and educational facilities. The results also demonstrated that NEMA faces serious difficulties in managing the IDP camp, including inadequate federal money and the IDPs' refusal to return to their home states. The study recommends that regardless of the location of IDPs, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government of Nigeria through NEMA to provide basic facilities such as accommodations, educational facilities, food items and security, especially now that there is high rate of sexual abuse in the camps and kidnappings within and around the FCT.

Keywords: Security, accommodation, safety, conflict, education, intervention, Emergency, IDPs

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government was forced to start looking for long-term solutions by creating a National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) due to the rising number of forced displacements brought on by ethnic, religious, economic, and boundary conflicts, as well as other government decisions, natural and man-made disasters, and the ensuing massive destruction of lives and property.

With the exception of natural disasters and displacement brought on by development, the estimated number of internally displaced people worldwide over the past ten years has been 25 million. These people have been displaced due to armed conflicts and widespread violence. Sadly, the majority of them are found in Africa, where they have brought attention time and time again to the growing

threat of displacement as a means of undoing the progress made in attaining a decent standard of living for all peoples as well as the accomplishments of developmental initiatives.

The Federal Government of Nigeria signed, ratified, and deposited its instruments of the African Union (Kampala) Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa, which went into effect on December 6, 2012, after realizing that IDPs are among the most vulnerable populations in Nigeria and around the world for obvious reasons (The AU Kampala Convention, 2009)

Due to the frequency of internal displacement and the detrimental impact it has on the social, cultural, political, and economic lives of those affected, internally displaced people have drawn attention from all over the world (Idowu, Gideon & Bernhard, 2022). The internally displaced persons' camp has come to be associated with misery, anguish, and pain, claim Atata & Charles (2020). The news of multiple donations made by the government and other individuals contradicts the pleas and complaints made by the displaced, despite the facilities challenges in these camps, which primarily focus on housing, security, health care, and educational facilities. It is expected that the facilities announced to be provided for them should be able to care for the displaced during their period of displacement.

The government's apathy towards the plight of the displaced persons in Abuja worsens the circumstances in the camps. Adewale (2016) characterizes a camp as terrible, with a terrible security setup and a persistent risk of an epidemic breakout. The condition of the facilities in the camps for internally displaced people, however, runs counter to the rumored donations of cash and services, which are reported in the national dailies.

This study assessed the National Emergency Management Agency Intervention and management of AMAC IDPs camp, Abuja. The variables covered in the study were the needs satisfaction with food and clothing interventions, need satisfaction with shelter interventions which represented the physiological needs and needs satisfaction with security and protection interventions, as well as IDPs' love and belongingness needs satisfaction.

In this study, the forms and effect of the services provided at the two IDPs camps in the Federal Capital Territory (Kuchingoro camps) was assessed. The scope focused on the investigation on the socioeconomic characteristic of IDPs in each of the camps, forms of services made available at the camps and the performance of the services provided in meeting the needs of IDPs.

Research Questions

- i. How has NEMA's intervention affected accommodation of AMAC IDPs?
- ii. What is the effect of NEMA's intervention on the safety and security of AMAC IDPs?
- iii. To what extent has NEMA intervened on the feeding of AMAC IDPs?
- iv. What is the effect of NEMA's intervention on the education of AMAC IDPs?

Specific objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) intervention and the management of IDPs camps in AMAC using the following specific objectives:

- i. To appraise how NEMA's intervention affected accommodation of AMAC IDPs
- ii. To assess the effect of NEMA's intervention on the safety and security of AMAC IDPs.
- iii. To evaluate NEMA's intervention on the feeding of AMAC IDPs?
- iv. To appraise the intervention of NEMA on the education of AMAC IDPs.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used. Interview guide was used as source of primary data collection. The interview guide was used to interview the Head of Press of National Emergency Management Agency and the information obtained were used to assess NEMA's intervention and the management of internally displaced persons' camps in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) IDP camps.

RESULTS

On Thursday April 18, 2024, the researcher conducted an interview on the intervention of National Emergency Management Agency on internally displaced persons in Abuja municipal area council internally displaced persons' camps. The agency was represented by the head of the press unit, Mr. Ezekiel Manzo who was interviewed as thus:

The Coordination Mechanism of NEMA and their Primary Responsibilities to AMAC IDPs

Interviewer: What is the coordination mechanism of the National Emergency Management Agency and their responsibilities to IDPs in AMAC IDPs camps?

Interviewee: NEMA was established via Act 12, as amended by Act 50 of 1999, to manage disasters in Nigeria.⁶⁸ NEMA's mandate is to address disaster-related issues, coordinate responses to all emergencies, and provide relief through the establishment of concrete structures and measures. Basically, there are disaster management structures at all levels. At the federal level, NEMA is divided into six zonal offices according to the six geopolitical zones of the nation, and one central office is located in Abuja. State governments may create State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) in accordance with the NEMA Act. At the moment, SEMAs are the primary agencies for disaster management in 22 of the 36 states. The NEMA Zonal offices act as a point of contact for pertinent SEMAs and the headquarters office in Abuja. However, it collaborates with the Federal Capital Territory Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Therefore, lighter matters like the administration of IDPs in AMAC fall under the direct purview of the FEMA. He further said that there are no formal camps established by the FEMA or NEMA; however, the sheer number of displaced persons has forced populations to settle in informal and host communities, mostly in the outskirts of the city. Hence, all the camps in within and outside AMAC are not formal camps.

Research Question one: How has NEMA's intervention affected accommodation of AMAC IDPs?

Interviewer: I'd like to hear your perspectives on how NEMA has intervened so far on the accommodation situation of IDPs in terms of management in Lugbe, Area One and New Kuchingoro.

Interviewee: The IDPs population in the FCT with AMAC inclusive comprised of people from the north central fleeing from political and religious violence and communal clashes, who are also skeptical about returning to their homes. The agency knowing that the IDPs in AMAC were not displaced by any disaster in AMAC, knew that they were migrants who decided to set up camps for themselves. The agency has provided accommodations to these IDPs in their home states. Building concrete structures to accommodate the IDPs in Lugbe, Area one and New Kuchingoro camps

specifically, will be out of place because they are not formally recognized camps in the FCT that is why the camps are characterized by dilapidated structures.

Research Question Two: What is the effect of NEMA's intervention on the safety and security of AMAC IDPs?

Interviewer: Looking at the security challenges in the FCT, what can you say about the safety and security of the IDPs in AMAC camps?

Interviewee: NEMA in collaboration with FEMA, security agencies and the leadership of the camps have been doing it can to provide security for the camps, even though it is not the primary responsibility of NEMA.

Research Question Three: To what extent has NEMA intervened on the feeding of AMAC IDPs?

Interviewer: Has NEMA been regularly providing food items to the IDPs in AMAC camps?

Interviewee: When the camps were newly established, NEMA regularly provides food items to the IDPs and distribute the items by itself for effective distribution. but after an event which occurred about ten years ago, in which the IDPs revolted against the abandonment of NEMA and reported to the Human Right Commission (HRC). The HRC presented the revolt to NEMA and a meeting was held between NEMA, HRC and the Leaderships of the various camps and a conclusion was arrived at; that NEMA will provide means of transportations for the IDPs to return to their respective home states and food items be provided alongside. On the appointed day, none of the IDPs agreed to return home. Furthermore, the agency has a challenge of funding by the Federal government and uncontrolled child bearing by the IDPs. These are some of the reasons why NEMA seldom visits the IDPs camps in AMAC. Though the Agency has been regularly providing food to the Lugbe IDPs camp because it consists of the persons recently affected by the flood that occurred in Niger State.

Interviewer: How effective is NEMA in the management of food items distribution to the IDPs in AMAC camps?

Interviewee: According to Mr. Ezekiel, the agency does not give out food items to anyone for distribution to the IDPs, rather it does that by itself for effective and equitable distribution.

Research Question Four: What is the effect of NEMA's intervention on the education of AMAC IDPs?

Interviewer: So far, what educational facilities and equipment has NEMA provided to curb educational setbacks of the IDPs in AMAC camps?

Interviewee: The Agency as earlier indicated, cannot build concrete structures in the camps because they are not formal IDPs camps and the agency has also tried to persuade the IDPs to return to their respective home state after the peace recovery, but to no avail.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

NEMA's intervention on accommodation of IDPs in AMAC IDPs Camps

The findings of Atata & Charles (2020) are similar to the findings of this research in that, the internally displaced persons' camp has become synonymous to discomfort, suffering and pain. The

news of multiple donations made by the government and other individuals contradicts the pleas and complaints made by the displaced, despite the facilities challenges in these camps, which primarily focus on housing, security, health care, and educational facilities. It is expected that the facilities announced to be provided for them should be able to care for the diseconomies. Many internally displaced people (IDPs) dwell in churches, mosques, town halls, unfinished and abandoned buildings, and other types of makeshift camps because there aren't enough of these spaces to house the displaced population. Many internally displaced people (IDPs) made due with improvised solutions in the event of accommodation shortages. They would gather grass and sticks, which are connected together on the ground in a circular shape, and thatch the grasses on the sticks (Atata & Charles, 2020).

NEMA'S Intervention on the safety and security of IDPs in AMAC IDPs Camps

As justified by the report of Mr. Ezekiel Manzo (The Head of Press Unit, NEMA), that agency it is not the sole responsibility of the agency, but the agency is working in collaboration with FEMA and some security agents to provide security to the various IDPs in AMAC. The findings of this research are also in line with the findings of Borton *et al.* in Aminchi and Ya'ajiram (2021) and he affirms that responsibility for assisting and protecting IDPs lies with the national authorities. This is against the background that there is no international law that streamlined how IDPs should be secured. Therefore, securing and protecting IDPs is outside the purview of the concerned nation's national security architecture. In the end, finding long-lasting answers to the problems they encounter is necessary for the safety of IDPs within the nation. The current policy inadequacies and absence of a specialized framework to appropriately address the crisis or cover medium- to longer-term requirements for IDPs impede the ability of the institutional arrangements to manage the problem, notwithstanding their struggles, especially in the near term. A precarious position is made worse by the multiplicity of players, overlapping of responsibilities, unclear mandates, and ineffective coordination among the government entities in charge of carrying them out. This is supported by the conclusions of the researcher working on behalf of NEMA, Mr. Ezekiel Manzo (Head of Press Unit), who claimed that the organization was aware that the people living in AMAC as IDPs were not affected by any natural disaster but rather were migrants who chose to establish camps for themselves. He went on to say that these IDPs had accommodations from the agency in their home states.

Because the IDP camps in Lugbe, Area One, and New Kuchingoro are not officially recognized in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), it is inappropriate to construct concrete structures or tents to house them. This is why the camps are known for their deteriorating infrastructure. There are also youngsters who have been displaced living in the AMAC camps. Additionally, there are five primary areas of focus for the Child Protection division: unaccompanied and separated children (UAC/SC), child labor, child soldiers, violence against children, and children involved in legal issues. In its broadest sense, child protection aims to increase the ability of intervention partners to safeguard children's welfare, integrate child protection into larger humanitarian responses, stop abuses, offer safe spaces for at-risk children to come forward with concerns, and direct at-risk children to the right places for help (Shittu *et al.*, 2021).

NEMA's Intervention on the Feeding of IDPs in AMAC IDPs Camps

Mr. Ezekiel Manzo (the Head of Press Unit) who affirmed that when the camps were newly established, NEMA regularly provides food items to the IDPs and distribute the items by itself for effective distribution. But after an event which occurred about ten years ago, in which the IDPs revolted against the abandonment of NEMA and reported to the Human Right Commission (HRC). The HRC presented the revolt to NEMA and a meeting was held between NEMA, HRC and the Leaderships of the various camps and a conclusion was arrived at; that NEMA will provide means of transportations for the IDPs to return to their respective home states and food items be provided alongside. On the appointed day, none of the IDPs agreed to return home. Furthermore, the agency has a challenge of funding by the Federal government and uncontrolled child bearing by the IDPs. This is similar to the findings of Ogubvu & Okoli (2020) in the interview of a NEMA official who reported that the poor distribution of available relief materials is challenge in the IDPs camp in AMAC; lack of adequate funding of NEMA by the federal government is also challenge in managing IDPs camps and diversion of relief materials by camp officials is a major challenge in managing IDPs camp by NEMA. One of the IDPs in Ogubvu and Okolie (2020), reported that we have no enough food to eat here in the camp; we are always hungry because, in the past two months, the government people have not brought us food. As I am talking to you now, I and my kid siblings have not eaten since morning. We always eat our little breakfast late in the afternoon to be able to take us till the second day" We always eat our little breakfast late in the afternoon to be able to take us till the second day".

NEMA's Intervention on the Educational Facilities of IDPs in AMAC IDPs Camps

Additionally, Suleiman & Rafatu (2021) established that IDPs and their relatives constructed the informal IDP Camps in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory. The IDP camps are in poor condition with regard to food, shelter, facilities, and means of subsistence. Tents and other temporary housing make up IDP camps, and the infrastructure and services in the areas of education and health were woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the displaced. In addition, IDPs have stated that it is extremely difficult to pay for their medical and educational expenses (Suleiman & Rafatu, 2021). The study found some cases of distress and trauma among the IDPs, some feelings of dejection and powerlessness arising from the conditions of life. This is not surprising considering the massive challenges they faced prior, during and after displacement. The study also found little state intervention on the plight of IDPs in the FCT.

CONCLUSION

There is a clear connection between conflict and displacement in Nigeria, as well as significant underlying development deficiencies. Enhancing human development and reducing conflict, disasters, poverty, and insecurity depend heavily on the efficient management of displacement. Even though there has long been displacement in Nigeria, it has only recently come to light due to the northeastern crisis and natural disasters like floods in the Niger, Benue, and Lokoja valleys. This has forced both domestic and international actors to adopt new perspectives and take action to address the issue in a sustainable way. As reported by the head of press unit, Mr. Ezekiel Manzo, NEMA is basically responsible to prepare, respond and provide accurate measures of managing people affected by crises. But this is contrary to the report of NEMA, because the internally displaced persons in the AMAC IDPs camps are all as a result of forced displacement. Regardless of their location, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government of Nigeria through NEMA to provide basic facilities such

as accommodations, educational facilities, food items and security, especially now that there is high rate of sexual abuse in the camps and kidnappings within and around the FCT.

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