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## Impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the Socio-Economic Activities of Jos Town, Plateau State.

By

**Emmanuel Sambo Kudu**

Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
University of Jos, Nigeria.

E-mail: [emmanuelambokudu@gmail.com](mailto:emmanuelambokudu@gmail.com)

Phone: 07037740235; 09047324015

### Abstract

*Conflict has become a natural tendency that has been identified as man's default configuration. Man has the tendency to exhibit unusual behaviour when conditions seem unfavourable to him. Over the years, Nigeria has had its share of the consequences brought about by several grades of conflicts, resulting in the ever-increasing population of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The aftermath of every conflict leaves behind victims of such events who for the sake of their lives flee to neighbouring settlements in an attempt to find refuge. The receiving/host communities on the other hand are faced with the challenge of caring for these refugees, and due to these unforeseen circumstances, change (both positive and negative) will therefore be inevitable in the social and economic life of these communities. This paper seeks to analyze the impacts of IDPs on the socio-economic life of residents in the Jos Town of Plateau State, following the rather unfortunate actions of the "Boko Haram" sect in Adamawa State. The method adopted for this research involved visiting the IDP camps and interviewing them. With close reference to the subject-matter. Responses were collected and matched alongside a few existing written works for corroboration. The findings show that although the presence of IDPs in the Jos Town has caused some socio-economic stresses, certain obvious benefits have been recorded. The paper further suggests measures that could be taken by all social and security agencies concerned for easing the pressure exerted by this phenomenon on the host communities on one hand and the struggle to adapt to new environments by the Internally Displaced Persons on the other hand.*

**Keywords:** Impacts, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Socio-Economic, Activities, refugee

## **Introduction**

On a global scale, by the end of 2009, 42.3 million people were displaced as a result of violent conflicts, and human right violations. It is however, very important to know that 27.1 million out of the 42.3 million were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) while 15.2 million were refugees outside their country of nationality or country of residence. It is now common knowledge that when large numbers of people are forced by certain situations to move to other places to seek refuge, they bring into their host communities “the good, the bad and the ugly” aspects of their lives. With this scenario, it has been generally recognized that there are humanitarian, socio-economic and development challenges during (and even after) the time of displacement.

The paper focuses on the displacement period, and the post-displacement period, examining the impact of the IDP’s on the socio-economic life of the host community (the Jos town). These impacts are considered in both positive and negative perspectives. The paper also examines the impacts of the IDP’s on the physical environment of the Jos town, in Plateau State. These include settlement patterns, housing and social amenities.

While the focus of this paper is on the impact of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their host communities, it is also important to note that the number of people displaced by violent conflict and some human rights violations within countries as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) exceeds the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have crossed their national boundaries to seek refuge by a wide margin. The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has continued to increase over the past decade and even increased in recent years. By the end of 2009, there were about 27.1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) globally who were living in protracted displacement situations in 34 countries (IDMC, 2010).

The most IDPs currently live in Syria (6.6 million) and Columbia (6.3 million). Iraq and Sudan follow with 3.3 million and 3.2 million respectively, Yemen (2.5 million), Nigeria (2.1 million), South Sudan (1.7 million), Ukraine (1.7 million), DRC (1.5 million) and Pakistan (1.5 million) complete the list of the first ten (10) countries, which together account for 75% of the world’s population of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). (IDMC 2015 Global Overview, UNHCR Global Trends 2015). The statistics of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) globally is a pointer for national governments especially in the developing countries to initiate workable ideas and plans on how to address the challenges encountered by these large populations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as well as their host communities.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

Internally displaced persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee or to leave their homes or places of residence, as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." On the other hand a refugee is a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 1A(2), 1967 Protocol).

However, Refugees and the internally displaced are categories of persons who share many similarities such as material conditions. For historical, political and legal reasons, it has been judged appropriate not to include internally displaced persons in the refugee definition contained in the 1951 Convention. There has been confusion about the concept of internally displaced persons and it has been argued that the internally displaced should be treated as refugees because they are essentially the same. For most people, as evident from the media coverage, the term 'refugee' refers to anyone who has been forced to leave his home. Whether the person has left the country or not is seen as irrelevant. The legal terminology is however more precise, as it requires the refugee to be outside his or her country of origin because of a fear of persecution. Internally displaced persons have also been referred to as 'internal refugees' which is an oxymoron. This creates confusion by blurring the distinction between refugees and internally displaced persons.

The requirements to become a refugee according to the 1951 Refugee Convention are precise and limited: there has to be a "well-founded fear of persecution", and this fear must be linked to one of the enumerated grounds. The IDP definition is much broader and includes, for instance, natural and man-made disaster. A person becomes a refugee only when he or she crosses an international border, whereas an internally displaced person remains within his or her country. The legal status of refugees is conferred in accordance with international legally binding documents. No similar binding document defines internally displaced persons. The status of refugee entitles the individual to certain rights. Being internally displaced does not confer any additional rights; instead, internally displaced persons have all the same rights as other citizens within the country.

The UN definition of an Internally Displaced Person has two important components:

1. **An element of coerced or forced movement:** Displacement is the result of circumstances that leave no other choice to people but to leave or flee, such as war, ethnic tensions, disasters;
2. **The fact that the victims have not crossed an international state border:** IDPs remain within the country of their habitual residence. Most IDPs are generally citizens of the country in which they are displaced.

These two terms (Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees) even though often used interchangeably, have specific differences. Refugees leave their country of origin to seek protection abroad. IDPs remain within their own country; There are more causes of displacement in cases of internal displacement. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, persecution is the only grounds for conferring refugee status on a person; Refugees lose the protection provided by their own country and therefore need the protection of the international community. This special protection is granted to them through the special status created by the 1951 Refugee Convention, which provides for a special regime for refugees; The status of refugees entitles the individual to certain rights, the status of internal displacement does not entitle anyone to additional rights other than those they have as a citizen of their country. As citizens in their own countries, IDPs are still under the protection of their government (at least legally). Therefore, no special status has been created for them under international law. They should enjoy the same rights as the rest of the population.

## **Historical Perspective of Boko Haram Activities in Nigeria – An Overview**

Boko Haram is a controversial Nigerian militant Islamist group that seeks the imposition of Sharia law in the northern states of Nigeria. The name “Boko Haram” comes from the Hausa word book, meaning “Animist, Western or otherwise non-Islamic education” and the Arabic word haram figuratively meaning “sin” (literally, “forbidden”).

Boko Haram opposes not only Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well. The group was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. In 2004 it moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, where it set up a base called “Afghanistan”, from that base they launched attacks on nearby police outposts, killing police officers, this was in retaliation to their encounter with security forces at Maiduguri, an encounter which left many of its followers dead. Yusuf is hostile to democracy and the secular education system, vowing that “this war that is yet to start would continue for long” if the political and education system was not changed. ([www.naija.com](http://www.naija.com)).

Prior to the clashes, many Muslim leaders and at least one military official had warned the authorities about Boko Haram, but those warnings were reportedly ignored. In Yobe state, fighters reportedly “used fuel-laden motorcycles” and “bows with poisoned arrows” to attack a police station. On 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2009, allegations were made that Yusuf himself was killed by Nigerian security forces after being taken into custody.

In January 2010, the group struck again in Borno State, killing four people in DalaAlemderi ward in Maiduguri metropolis. In September 7, 2010, Boko Haram freed over 700 inmates from a prison in Bauchi State and in December 2010, the group was blamed for a market bombing, after which 92 of its members were arrested by police.

On Friday January 28, 2011, a gubernatorial candidate was assassinated, along with his brother and four other police officers. On Tuesday February 8, 2011, Boko Haram gave conditions for peace. They demanded that the Borno State governor, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, should step down from office with immediate effect and also allow members to reclaim their Mosque in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. In March 29, 2011, the police thwarted a plot to bomb an ANPP election rally in Maiduguri, Borno State. The threat was blamed on Boko Haram. On April 1 (the day before the original date of the Nigeria’s legislative elections), suspected Boko Haram members attacked a police station in Bauchi.

Between April and May 29, 2011, the activities of the Boko Haram became more devastating. A Polling centre and the Independent National Electoral Commission were bombed and several people were shot and killed. On April 20 and 22, the Boko Haram killed a Muslim Cleric and freed 14 prisoners during a jail break in Yola, Adamawa State respectively. Offer of amnesty by the Governor-Elect of Borno State on May 19, 2011 was rejected by the Boko Haram in June, 17 2011.

The police force headquarters, Abuja was bombed and this was pronounced as the first suicide bombing in Nigeria which official reports claimed the bombing was aimed at the Police

Inspector General. In November 4, 2011, a major Boko Haram bomb blast killed over 60 people in Damaturu, Yobe State.

Following the trend of these events and the subsequent inadequacies of the Government to solve the problem of these rather unfortunate attacks on human lives and property, many people have fled their homes and even communities to neighbouring communities/villages and even beyond their state boundaries in attempt to save their lives and families. The deadly activities of this group has become the primary reason behind migration trends of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and this reason serves as the pivot on which this paper hangs.

### **Economic Impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Developing countries that host refugees often experience long-term economic, social and environmental impacts. On arrival of these refugees, they compete with the local citizens for scarce resources such as food, shelter, jobs as well as other public utilities and service. Their presence increases the demand for education, health services, infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation, transportation, electricity and so on. In some cases, it also creates excessive demand for natural resources such as water, grazing land and fuel.

The impact of the refugee presence is both positive and negative (UNHCR, 2004). The dynamic between positive and negative factors is complex and also varies, depending on several other factors which may include; the political economy of hosting communities, urban-rural interactions, and the nature of host-refugee relations. Furthermore, even when a refugee situation creates economic opportunities for both the displaced and their hosts, there can be winners and losers in each group. In the Jos Plateau clusters of refugees have been received at different periods within the last three to four years. A majority of these refugees came from Adamawa state. They found it more comfortable to settle within the Jos town due to the fact that they had relatives who had been living there for quite some time, and because of these they had little trouble in locating where they were. Their relatives were able to give them some form of accommodation and relief within the neighbourhoods where they lived. The disturbing issue however is that these neighbourhoods are some of the poorly organized areas as far as housing is concerned. They are basically slum areas characterized by poor living conditions and absence of those facilities and services that make an environment decent for human habitation.

Commercial activities within the town took a new dimension, as the population increased, so also traders and service providers increased. Some of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who had formally been traders in their homes were able to start their trade again, with some little assistance from relatives and other non-governmental organizations (interest groups, churches, mosques and well-to-do individuals). This dimension of economic activities created more options in various aspects of goods and services, thus cheaper rates were recorded with regards to the purchase of goods and services rendered. With this paradigm shift, buyers of goods and enjoyed cheap commodities and reaped value for their money while host traders and services providers experienced low patronage thus, compelling them to cut down prices of their own commodities in order to attract consumers. For instance, before the influx of refugees in the Jos town the cost of polishing a pair of shoes was not less than one hundred naira (₦100.00), but as soon as most refugee youths took to shoe polishing the cost dropped down to fifty naira

(₦50.00). Other items which were being sold at high cost such as matches, cigarettes, confectionaries, etc. dropped appreciably.

Another area worthy of mentioning is skilled and unskilled labour. The Jos town also experienced the influx of artisans in various fields and areas of specialization (masons, labourers, mechanics, etc.) thus making cheap labour available to property developers and other aspects of economic activities that did not require any form of specialization, had more than enough manpower resources to choose from e.g cleaners, house-helpers, water vendors and so on.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were skillful immediately got engaged in one form of economic activity or the other. However, those who did not want to invest meaningfully, found themselves in company of jobless friends who also do not want to do anything meaningful with their lives, thus increasing the number of hoodlums and miscreants within the host community and the neighbourhood. Another negative result concerning this development is the increase in waste generated as a result of the relative increase in production of goods and services.

In the area of transportation, the city experienced traffic congestion in peak hours, (during the morning hours; 7:00 – 9:00am, as people are clamouring to go for their businesses in the town, and also evening hours; 4:00 – 6:00pm, when commercial and administrative activities are over and people are rushing back home). In both situations, when this happens accident cases have been recorded. Areas of heavy traffic in the Jos town include Gada-Biyu, Farin-Gada, Yan-Doya, British America Junction and Terminus area.

Notwithstanding the positive contributions that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) can make to the economy of host communities, such contributions should be viewed in terms of both winners and losers among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as well as the host populations. As it is in many other developing nations, so it is in our own local context. As observed earlier, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have provided cheap labour in sectors such as agriculture, construction, house-keeping and so on. In this regard, the presence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has affected the wages of local non-skilled workers and benefited local entrepreneurs. (Maystadt and Verwim, 2009).

Other studies have also shown some similarities to this regard – an increase in the demand for rental housing from either well-to-do refugees or expatriate aid personnel particularly benefited local property owners and disadvantaged less well-to-do host populations looking for rental housing (Schmeidl, 2002). This illustrates that when refugees arrive, those among the host population who have resources, education or power are better positioned to benefit from the refugee presence, while those who lack these resources in the local context become further marginalized (Maystadt and Verwim, 2009).

### **Social Impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

The presence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in host communities has potential social impacts on the ethnic balance of the hosting communities with reference to social conflicts as well as delivery of social services. The socio-cultural impact of refugees on the host communities may occur simply because of their presence. Thus, if traditional animosities exist between cultural or ethnic groups, it may cause problems when one group becomes exposed to

another that has been forced to become a refugee. A simple example can be seen, in the late 1990s, the mere presence of Kosovo-Albanian refugees in Macedonia generated tensions between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Macedonia (Pini, 2008). The UNHCR has also found that when refugees are from the same cultural and linguistic group as the local population, there are greater opportunities for peaceful co-existence and interaction among them (UNHCR, 1998). For instance, approximately 25,000 refugees from the Central African Republic were in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the 1990s. Like there Congolese hosts, the refugees belonged to the Yakoma ethnic group, so their integration into the host society was smooth and peaceful.

In the case of the Jos Plateau, who found themselves in the Jos town from Adamawa State their situation was similar. As mentioned earlier, some of these IDPs had relatives from the same ethnic group) who were already living in the Jos town for quite a long period. Thus, on their arrival, they were able to locate these relatives and squat with them. One important fact to note here is that these non-Plateau indigenes that had been living in different neighbourhoods within the Jos town for the past twenty to thirty years have been living peacefully with their neighbours. In this case, one can rightly argue that this was one of the many reasons why it was not a problem for these IDPs to quickly find shelter.

The already existing harmonious relationship between the indigenes and non-indigenes of Jos town provided the needed atmosphere for these displaced persons. It has also been observed in some of the neighbourhoods that friendship automatically evolved between some of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and their host populations on the basis of belonging to the same occupation or trade. For instance, those who are shoe repairers, traders, motorcycle operators, brick-layers and the likes quickly developed friendly relations with indigenes who practiced those trades, and as a result some of them preferred to squat with these new found friends who were willing to accommodate them. This made the problem of housing unbearable. In Gada-Biyu, Alheri, Utan areas of the Jos town, most houses had more than eight adults in one room and a population of about twenty to thirty adults in one of such houses. The result of this situation was the over-stretching of social amenities such as electricity, water, healthcare services, etc.

However, some of the well-to-do internally displaced families were able to acquire parcels of land within the outskirts of the town, where they built houses for themselves – these houses were characterized by simple designs and simple/cheap building materials such as mud-blocks. This has also impacted positively on the indigenous land owners, ward heads and authorities concerned with land acquisition, building permits as well as physical development. Artisans and skilled professionals (labourers, masons, plumbers, electricians, site engineers, architects, etc.) also enjoyed some form of benefits from these developments.

As observed earlier, the IDPs were in two main categories – the poor and the well-to-do. While the poor immediately sent their children to the public primary and secondary schools in the host communities, the well-to-do sent their children to the private schools within the same environment. But still others whose children had finished their secondary or primary schools, with no prospects of continuing their education either joined the army of unskilled labourers or entered into apprenticeship of some sorts. Enrolment into primary and secondary schools at Utan

village, Tudun-Wada and Kabong during the peak period (1999-2001) of refugee influx into the Jos town shows a marked increase of pupils and students (with about  $\frac{1}{5}$ ) during the period.

The physical environment on which all human activities take place is a reflection of the resident's attitudes towards the environment. With the increase in population, comes the increase in production and thus, waste generation. The poor environmental management attitude of residents now comes face to face with increase in waste generation thus giving rise to a continuous degeneration of environmental quality. The influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has also been associated with environmental impact on land, water, natural resources and gradual growth of slums as well as traces of urban sprawl. Various studies provide examples of different types of environmental impacts related to the influx of refugees and their long-term presence.

### **Conclusion**

As described earlier, the impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on socio-economic activities of host communities can be both negative and positive, and the dynamic between positive and negative factors is complex and varied depending in the context in which the phenomenon is being examined. Addressing the impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) therefore requires an understanding of the political economy of the host countries and the development implications of protracted situations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in those communities.

In spite of probably more negative than positive environmental impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), all manner of environmental problems should not be attributed to them alone. There is need to establish and understand the state of the environment before the arrival of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Attributing all environmental woes to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) might in fact amount to blaming the helpless and defenseless even for deteriorating conditions that predate the arrival of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Communities that host Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for long periods experience long term economic, social and environmental impacts. While these impacts on host communities are complex, they are not necessarily only negative. The economic impacts of refugee's presence on neighbouring communities have been both negative (e.g uncompensated public expenditure and burden on the economic infrastructure) and positive (e.g stimulated economies by increasing the size of local markets and reducing commodity prices). The positive contributions that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) can make to the economy of host communities should be viewed in terms of winners and losers among both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host population.

### **Recommendations**

Finding sustainable solutions to issues revolving round displacement is crucial to the development agenda of countries affected by conflict and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The responsibility of taking care of these vulnerable group of persons is not a task that one agency can handle alone. In recent decades, UNHCR, UNDP, and bilateral and multilateral agencies have implemented initiatives aimed at targeted development assistance (TDA) in order



to generate “win-win” solutions for countries and populations affected by forced displacement (UNHCR, 2009). We can therefore rightly assume that even in an internal displacement crisis, there are development opportunities that can bring benefits to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host populations and also prepare the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for sustainable solutions, including return, settlement in the host community or in other new settlements.

Every solution employed might likely have several challenges militating against its effectiveness as well as realization. Christensen and Harild, (2009:14) outline some key barriers to sustainable solutions for displaced people which are also a representation of critical development challenges:

1. Rights to land, property and houses that belonged to the displaced are, in many returnsituations contested, or the assets of the returnees have been taken over by others.
2. Livelihoods are disrupted or dependent on humanitarian aid, and livelihood rehabilitationis critical if solutions to displacement are to become sustainable, both if the displacedreturn home or if they have to settle elsewhere.
3. Delivery of services such as security, education, and health, together with basicinfrastructure are frequently inadequate or absent both in places of exile and upon return.
4. Accountable and responsive governance and the rule of law are often weak, particularlyat the local level, government capacity is limited, its legitimacy damaged, and socialcapital at the community level is impaired.

In the Jos town, for example, where school populations are increased, we see that facilities are rendered inadequate. The inadequate toilet facilities result in environmental pollution as a result of indiscriminate waste disposal (including human excreta). This is not a healthy situation and both government and communities affected (i.e Utan, Tudun-Wada and Kabong) must take urgent steps to remedy the situation. The communities should mobilize to dig pits as latrines and government to provide the required accessories for water system. On the disposal of other wastes, the three communities should each dig large incinerators for the dumping and burning of waste. These measures can help to keep the environment fit for human habitation and safe from possible outbreak of epidemic.

Regardless of all these challenges that may likely be faced, the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting civilians in internal displacement crises lies with the national authorities of the affected countries. However, the capacity and/or willingness of the authorities to fulfill their responsibilities are often insufficient or lacking. In the case of our area of study, efforts towards sustaining the IDPs seem to be coming more from churches, mosques and a few concerned and able individuals. However, most critical and urgent should be the provision of basic health services (especially midwives) to attend to pregnant women and children.

Another important international organization that could play another key role is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), it is a neutral, impartial, and independent organization that has a specific mandate to provide protection and assistance to persons affected by armed conflicts, internal disturbances, and tensions, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In general, the ICRC’s mandate is discharged in close cooperation with national societies of the Red Cross/Red Crescent supported by their International Federation. The national societies are

mandated to assist the most vulnerable within their own countries, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and are often the first and only organization present at the inception of a disaster. Although there are no members of the Red Cross or Red Crescent in the communities of our study, the well-developed ones in the state (Plateau State) can be deployed to these communities. NGOs respond to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs and other vulnerable people, based on their mandate and expertise. They can also play a valuable role in supporting the implementation of the collaborative response.

They can, for example:

1. Collect and provide information on protection and assistance needs of IDPs in areas where NGOs operate, as well as NGOs' response capacity to the UN RC/HC, other relevant agencies in the country team, and donors;
2. Participate in consultations on IDP issues under the leadership of the UN RC/HC and contribute to the development of a national IDP strategic plan, if possible, through an inclusive coordination forum for national and/or international NGOs;
3. Support the implementation of a national IDP strategic plan when in line with humanitarian principles and codes of conduct, as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
4. Monitor the implementation of the collaborative response by the UN HC/RC and the country team, including the commitment of country team agencies and the effectiveness of planned activities;
5. Advocate for the participation of IDPs at all stages of the international response, including planning, implementation, and assessment.

Development assistance targeting areas affected by IDPs can play a strategic role in mitigating negative impacts and increasing positive impacts of protracted refugee presence on host communities. The social impacts of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) – also context-specific, include inequalities between Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host populations and the resulting social tensions, which can be reduced by development project targeting both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the host communities. The impact of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the environment can also be alleviated through a combination of dispersed IDPs settlement and targeted area of development interventions. Finally, the ever-increasing population of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in our urban areas calls for new approaches to effectively address the needs of these displaced persons in the context of Urban Planning and Development.

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