

Assessing the effectiveness of government and non-governmental organization in assisting internally displaced women in Nigeria

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Abstract

Motivation: There is scant information on support systems for internally displaced persons in Nigeria, and none on internally displaced women in the New Kuchingoro camp. This limits the operations of aid agencies and other stakeholders, preventing them from providing targeted assistance.

Purpose: First, it examined the support provided by two government agencies: the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Second, it investigated and examined the support given by non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, and philanthropists. Third, it analysed the challenges facing these bodies, drew conclusions about the policy implications of the situation in New Kuchingoro, and made recommendations for changes that would improve the lives of internally displaced women in the camp.

Methods and approach: Using qualitative research methods, the study investigated and evaluated the various support systems provided by NCFRMI and NEMA to internally displaced women in the New Kuchingoro camp in Abuja, along with some NGOs, religious groups, and philanthropists.

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Findings: The study revealed the inadequacy of co-ordination between government agencies and NGOs in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the New Kuchingoro camp. While these NGOs were willing to provide humanitarian assistance to the women, the lack of administrative support from NCFRMI and NEMA frustrated this objective.

Policy implications: The government needs to clarify the respective roles of NCFRMI and NEMA with regard to IDPs and relationships with non-government aid providers, ensure adequate funding for IDPs, stamp out corruption, respect the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality, and ultimately address the underlying causes of displacement.

KEYWORDS

internally displaced women, NCFRMI, NEMA, New Kuchingoro camp, Nigeria

1 | INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement and the consequent humanitarian crises still confront humanity despite the hope that these would no longer be a problem after the Second World War. Since then, however, the global community has remained enmeshed in vicious cycles of war, displacement, and humanitarian crises (Brigido et al., 2019; GRID, 2019; Klugman, 2021; Long, 2014). Acknowledging the impact of internally displaced persons (IDPs) on global security, scholars have sought to identify the causes and remedies, pointing to various triggers for internal displacement, such as poverty (Admasu et al., 2021; Klugman, 2021), economic crises (Helgason, 2020; Owain & Maslin, 2018), natural disasters (Adeola, 2020; Martin et al., 2013; Olukolajo et al., 2014), political violence, and armed conflict (Adewale, 2016; Dirikgil, 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020; Proukaki, 2018). In response to the IDP crisis, the international community has adopted various protocols and frameworks to manage it.

Internal displacement remains an obstinate problem in Africa (Adeola, 2016; De Jesus, 2018; Lwabukuna, 2011) arising mostly from persistent conflicts, as well as other social factors. Nevertheless, the problem of IDPs caused by armed violence has remained a distinguishing characteristic of many African countries, especially Nigeria (Adewale, 2016; Agbaje, 2020; Ajayi, 2020; Amodu et al., 2021; Ekoh et al., 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Displaced persons are scattered across the country in what have become permanent IDP camps. One such is the New Kuchingoro camp in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Abuja, where 5,000 IDPs are settled, mostly women, from Gwoza Local Government Area (Olanrewaju et al., 2018a; Olanrewaju et al., 2018b; Onuoha, 2010). The humanitarian crisis has attracted the attention of both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which offer various levels of support to help these women survive.

Two Nigerian government humanitarian agencies, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), have been tasked with running the New Kuchingoro IDP camp (National Emergency Management Agency, 2015), but their work has not met expectations (Olanrewaju et al., 2018a; Olanrewaju et al., 2018b). The small number of men in the camp increases the burdens on these women, who are forced to eke out a living and raise children in situations that barely sustain life.

Against this background, the study addressed three issues. First, it examined the support provided by the government agencies, NCFRMI and NEMA. Second, it investigated and examined the support given by NGOs, religious organizations, and philanthropists. Third, it analysed the challenges facing these bodies, drew conclusions about the policy implications of the situation in New Kuchingoro, and made recommendations for changes that would improve the lives of internally displaced women (IDW) in the camp.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the conceptual framework and literature review, followed in Section 3 by the methods used. Section 4 presents the findings and discussion. Section 5 discusses the challenges facing government and non-government agencies in relation to IDPs, and specifically in the New Kuchingoro camp, followed by an analysis of the policy issues in Section 6. Section 7 concludes.

2 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the terms “IDP” and “refugee” are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. A refugee is defined by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as someone who:

owing to 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; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, n.d.-a)

In turn, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines internally displaced persons as:

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular 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.

(OCHA, 1998)

In other words, although refugees and IDPs might leave their homes for the same reasons, refugees cross international frontiers to seek sanctuary, while IDPs seek refuge within their own country.

The internal displacement of citizens across the globe clearly has an impact on society more broadly. For example, IDPs tend to live in slums on the outskirts of cities where the destruction of social capital leads to a loss of resilience (GRID, 2019, p. 1). Moreover, many IDPs receive no humanitarian aid to provide relief by mobilizing resources to meet basic and security needs. Often, the only IDPs who receive aid are those displaced by natural disasters. According to the Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), 16.5 million people have been forcibly displaced in Africa owing to armed conflict and natural disasters (GRID, 2019). These people are exposed to a life of vulnerability, poverty, and abuse, even inside the camps (Haysom, 2013; Horyniak et al., 2016). Many die during the flight from their homes, upon arrival at their new location, or as a result of injuries sustained in an insurgency, for example. GRID (2019) notes that the total number of IDPs worldwide now exceeds the number of refugees. Notably, Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention fails to provide IDPs with the necessary support.

Although IDW are under-researched in terms of the coping and survival strategies they adopt to return to a normal life, there is prolific research on IDPs and IDW in general because the topic is central to the socio-political development of many nations. For example, Oduwole and Fadeyi (2013) described the situation of IDPs in Nigeria, focusing on the survivors of the bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja by Boko Haram and on individuals

who were displaced by floods. They underscored the lack of functional and effective policies and concluded that the scale and the crisis of internal displacement contradicted the development discourse and jeopardized the country's attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, before these were superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016.

Other authors, such as Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011), have drawn attention to the emotional scarring experienced by IDPs, finding that prolonged emotional problems resulting from memories of trauma affected adolescents' coping strategies. In addition, Ogwo (2013) found that the consequences of armed conflict and internal displacement pose a threat to the general well-being of IDPs, especially children and adolescents, whose condition is often worsened by the poor living conditions in camps.

Ajiboye et al. (2015) investigated the psychosocial difficulties of IDW in camps in Lagos State, finding that women experience such problems because of family breakdown. Sheikh et al. (2015) explored the occurrence of depression among IDPs after the post-election violence of 2015 in Kaduna State, finding that IDPs living in the Hajj camp developed post-conflict depression and depression per se. In addition, the exposure to beatings and the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were independent predictors of depression among the women, with unemployed and elderly IDPs also showing signs of depression.

Olukolajo et al. (2014) examined the effects of conflict in Nigeria on investments in real estate among displaced people in Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo, finding that most would not reinvest in conflict-affected areas for fear of losing their investments. They recommended that all levels of government step up efforts to reduce armed conflict, partly through the integration of local communities.

The study by Okoli and Iortyer (2014) showed that the Boko Haram insurgency has led not only to internal displacement but also loss of life, human rights violations, livelihood crises, and public insecurity. Mirth's (2014) study on the experiences of IDPs in Durumi in Abuja, and Bama and Gwoza in the North East zone of Nigeria concluded that the government was deliberately unresponsive to the needs of IDPs because it wanted them to move elsewhere. Consequently, the conditions in which IDPs lived in these areas were inadequate.

Isokon (2014) assessed the well-being of Bakassi settlers in Cross River State, along with the effect of the relocation plan, finding that these IDPs were deprived of basic needs, were extremely poor, had no livelihoods, and faced discrimination, inhumane treatment, and human rights violations. The study recommended campaigns to promote attitudinal change, harmony, co-operation, peace, and unity among the settlers and neighbouring communities. The study also recommended that the government take a strategic development approach to tackling the IDPs' problems, including efforts to promote economic empowerment, job provision, infrastructure development, and the functional participation of IDPs in decisions regarding their resettlement.

Adesote and Peters (2015) identified the root causes of internal displacement as inter-ethnic, political, and inter-communal violence, the mismanagement of identity conflicts, the chronic abuse of power, violations of human rights, and inequalities in the sharing of power and national wealth. They recommended appropriate management of the various conflicts, the equal distribution of resources, the implementation of genuine federalism, and the promotion of good governance and national security to prevent internal displacement.

Adamu and Rasheed (2016) examined insecurity in Nigeria's Northern Region and its effects on IDPs, finding that the state of insecurity in the country has made people vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and neglect, which in turn prompts them to leave their homes. The high number of IDP camps across the country suggests that not only those who are living in these camps but also the government and host communities are suffering from the effects of the Boko Haram insurgency. The study recommended intelligence gathering and surveillance to help law enforcement agencies to become more proactive and capable of predicting potential insurgent attacks, rather than simply reacting to incidents after they have occurred.

According to Olanrewaju et al. (2018a), there is a need to ensure that IDPs' basic social, economic, and security needs are met. Although the United Nations and the Kampala Convention consider the provision of such needs a priority in humanitarian interventions, IDPs continue to suffer neglect and deprivation. Benedicta (2014) noted that displaced women across the African continent experience similar challenges, responsible for all household activities,

including earning a livelihood to support their children. Martin (2004, 2011) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2008) confirm that the IDW in camps lack adequate security and their basic needs are not met, which prevents them from leading productive lives.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Research design

An explanatory research design was used. Explanatory research seeks to connect ideas to foster an understanding of causes and effects regarding a particular phenomenon, and includes methods to examine why and how a phenomenon occurs. The explanatory research design was chosen in order to understand both the policies that govern support to IDPs and their implementation by the Nigerian government and non-governmental organisations in the New Kuchingoro IDP camp.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews and document analysis were the data-collection methods used to investigate and evaluate the various support systems. The FGDs focused on the women's experiences of various aid agencies, including NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropic organizations, which have played a key role in humanitarian efforts in the camp and are usually at the forefront of activities. Many of these groups identify with the plight of the women in the camps as most of their workers are local. However, government humanitarian aid is almost entirely lacking, with food items often diverted to private hands.

The African Union Convention for Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and the Sphere Minimum Standards for Humanitarian Assistance have shaped the National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) that guides the management of IDPs. Using the NDMF as a core document in the study allowed for a systematic methodology comprising data collection, the comparison of the data with the principles encapsulated in the document, and the identification of themes.

3.2 | Location of the research

The research site was the New Kuchingoro IDP camp in the Abuja Municipal Area Council. The camp was well-positioned for research, with a rich ethnographic configuration and official recognition as an informal IDP camp. According to National Emergency Management Agency (2015), the people living in the camps were displaced from the Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State (Olorok, 2019). Although incidents of Boko Haram insurgency were mostly reported in North East Nigeria, Gwoza was where it began its terrorist activities (Adesoji, 2010, 2011; Akinola, 2015; Elkaim, 2012; Hassan, 2015), and the area had experienced more violent conflict than others. The language spoken in New Kuchingoro is Kanuri, for which an interpreter was readily found in the study. The site had for years been experiencing neglect and abandonment from the federal and state governments, with the threat of being returned home ever hanging over the IDPs' heads. Permission to enter the camp was obtained from the camp management, NCFRMI, and NEMA.

3.3 | Selection of participants

Non-probabilistic, purposive sampling was employed for the research, with the initial participants referring the researchers to others who might be interested in participating (snowball sampling). The same method was used to select government and non-government officials. In addition to a series of FGDs, in-depth interviews were conducted

with key participants, along with document analysis. Thus, triangulation (Denzin, 1978, 2006), whereby more than one method was employed, ensured a comprehensive account of the effectiveness of the various support systems provided to IDW in the New Kuchingoro camp.

3.4 | Data collection

Before data collection, ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee on Human (Non-Health) Research. Moreover, to gain access to the camp, a letter of introduction was sent to the NCFRMI and NEMA office in Abuja. Once permission had been granted, two officials who were able to refer the researchers to others were contacted. In the camp, the researchers established a cordial relationship with the relevant officials and administrators in charge.

Five FGDs and 30 interviews were conducted to gather data. The focus groups contained six participants, comprising women in the New Kuchingoro IDP camp and members of NGOs. To guard against bias and ensure that diverse perspectives were reflected, the FGDs and semi-structured interviews were conducted with women at multiple sites in the camp. The interviews were conducted with women in the camp and representatives of the two government agencies in their offices from May to July 2021. Interview transcripts were coded to identify key themes. As a pilot study revealed that the camp was guarded by a private security group in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, and the government had no security forces in place, the topic of state security forces was excluded from the discussions and interviews.

FGDs were organized in different locations in the camp to avoid distractions and to allow the participants to feel comfortable discussing topics related to the interview questions. Five were carried out, each comprising five to 10 participants and broadly divided into two age groups: 18- to 30-year-olds and 31- to 50-year-olds to ascertain whether and how the two age groups differed in their perceptions of the federal and state governments' interventions. Although the number of FGDs was low owing to the non-availability of participants who had been invited, it was sufficient and provided manageable data for the research. In order to maintain their anonymity, the FGDs and interviewees are identified only by their reference number and the date of each event.

Each FGD lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and ended only when data saturation was reached, i.e. until no new information could be provided (Olanrewaju et al., 2018a). Discussions were moderated by the research assistants who spoke Kanuri, to avoid misinterpretation of the IDWs' input, which was mostly in Kanuri, the indigenous language of Borno State. Guided by the work of Krueger and Mueller (2002) on running FGDs, the participants were asked about their experiences with the aid agencies.

The interviews with the IDP directors representing NCFRMI and NEMA were held in their offices. All other interviews were conducted in the camp. The interviews with the displaced women shed valuable light on the input received from the two agencies, revealing that many of the policies described by the officials had not been implemented.

Secondary data were gathered through document analysis of articles on past and current IDP camp issues. These sources provided valuable information on questions that had not been answered in interviews and focus groups and helped to validate findings.

3.5 | Integrity and validity of the data

Participants' age and economic status ensured the integrity of the data because it accurately represented the demographic profile of women in the New Kuchingoro camp. The data were validated through a review of the transcripts to ensure that the questions in the discussions and interviews had elicited the intended information.

3.6 | Data analysis

The transcripts of the FGDs and interviews were analysed through systematic content analysis (SCA) (Franzosi, 2008) and were read several times to enhance understanding of the data. Similar responses were grouped into themes using

the approach described by Mitchell et al. (2011) and Amoo et al. (2017). After the initial themes, more were added after reading the transcripts, which also led to the elaboration, combining, or splitting of themes where necessary (Amoo et al., 2017).

4 | FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The themes that emerged from the data analysis are presented and discussed below.

4.1 | Experiences of the women in New Kuchingoro camp

Interviews and FGDs revealed that the women were reluctant to return home. This reluctance may be attributed to the inability of the government to guarantee their safety and ensure a means of livelihood back home, as was stated in the third FGD with NCFRMI and NEMA held on July 2, 2021. In addition, the government's humanitarian assistance, meagre though it was in terms of what reached the women, would not be extended to them should they leave. Besides, the insurgency was still active in Gwoza, making it unsafe to return. Consequently, these women preferred to remain in the camp and exploit whatever means of survival were available, including begging and prostitution—two means of making ends meet that led to the women being ostracized in the broader community, as explained in an interview on July 13, 2021.

The women revealed that NCFRMI and NEMA officials who were tasked with their care did not present reports to the government based on their own data but instead included information supplied by non-governmental humanitarian agencies. Moreover, according to the women, these reports were never made public, and the recommendations were not implemented—something the government should address. Thus, the women's absolute dependence on NGOs and religious groups might have been attributed to the lack of professionalism of the government agencies and the completely inadequate the support that these provided, as set out in an interview with NEMA#2 on July 2, 2021. During an interview held on July 2, 2021, it was indicated that the two agencies' interventions had little or no impact on the camp. One respondent expressed her dissatisfaction in an interview held on July 8, 2021:

The government is not doing anything for us as regards our survival. Those officials working for the government agencies will just come to the camp for investigation of all the relief materials given to us by the non-government agencies and religious organizations and philanthropists....Even the purpose of officials coming from the agencies is that they are the third parties between the non-government agencies and the religious organizations and philanthropists, that always give us some food items. The major function of these officials is just to come and screen all these items or donations and give feedback to their authorities.

The above comment reveals that the displaced women were not happy with the way the NCFRMI and the NEMA looked after them, which suggested that the government was not particularly concerned about their survival, thereby making them dependent on the interventions of NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropic groups. In this case, the government has failed to uphold the principles of caring for its citizens. In addition, the government's neglect had led to anger and anxiety, which, according to Folkman (1984) can affect the mental well-being of IDW. Another respondent, in an interview on July 22, 2021, drew attention to the severity of the women's deprivation due to the government's lack of support:

Internally displaced women in New Kuchingoro IDP camp are seriously suffering at the hand of the government...Since we have been in the camp, we are struggling to survive. We are not really getting much from the government and as a result of the lack of government financial and humanitarian support, the internally

displaced women cannot get educational support, medical support, and proper welfare. Many women have been dying as a result of poor medical facilities in the camp because of the living conditions and situations of things in the New Kuchingoro IDPs camp.

This respondent's reference to education and medical care indicates that, if the IDW had had this support, they would have been empowered to find ways to earn a living, because they were generally poorly educated and accustomed to subsistence farming, which they could not do in the camps. Without their families, tools, and land, moved to the outskirts of a city and with no employable skills, they become helpless and hopeless in their new surroundings. Without support, it was unlikely that these women would ever be able to build the resilience needed to thrive.

Although Boko Haram was the original cause of these women's displacement, the government had added to their frustrations and distress. Moreover, while Boko Haram's contribution to their suffering was direct and violent, the government's action, or lack of it, was subtle and its impact lasting. By neglecting its responsibility to care for the women, the Nigerian government had committed what was tantamount to a human rights abuse and disregarded the crux of humanitarian action, which is to protect human health and lives, and ensure that the dignity of every human being is upheld. The women were not educationally equipped to earn a living as IDPs and were unlikely ever to be independent, given their lack of skills and the means to start businesses.

To enable these women to build resilience for future survival, government agencies should supply food and other necessities on a sustainable basis, including skills training. In addition, they should monitor the women's situation in situ rather than relying on second-hand information. The agencies should have a detailed account of each woman, her role in the family, her educational background, and her needs. Agency officials should be able to impress upon the government the significance of providing for these women's educational, financial, material, safety, and medical needs, and ultimately assistance to return home. Should these needs not be met, the women would continue to have to endure the dire conditions in the camp and struggle to survive.

4.2 | Role of the federal government agencies (NCFRMI and NEMA)

Based on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the NCFRMI and NEMA have the legal responsibility to carry out humanitarian interventions in response to IDPs in the country, including the women in the New Kuchingoro camp. NEMA was established in 1990 and assigned to handle disasters in Nigeria, while NCFRMI was established through Decree 52 of the NCFRMI Act 1989 to manage the status of refugees. It incorporates tenets of the United Nations Convention of 1951 and the 1967 and 1969 protocols of the African Union Convention.

Subsequently, the federal government expanded the NCFRMI's mandate to include IDPs because NEMA, unfortunately, failed to extend its operations in Abuja when displacements caused by the Boko Haram insurgency started in 2009. Since then, many people, particularly women, have been left homeless, helpless, and stranded. The conspicuous absence of the NCFRMI, NEMA, and the government continued until 2015, when there was agitation from different quarters concerning IDPs in Abuja and its environs. At this time, the humanitarian situation in the country worsened, making it impossible for the government's humanitarian agencies to intervene (Chidume et al., 2018).

Statistics show that in 2018 IDP camps in the FCT, including Abuja, accommodated 1.8 million people (UN OCHA, 2014). By July 31, 2019, the number of IDPs had increased to 1,980,036 (UNHCR, n.d.-b). However, no figures were available from the two government agencies, which appeared to have a serious lack of data on the women whose welfare they were purportedly overseeing.

According to OCHA, however, the NCFRMI and NEMA attended to the humanitarian needs of the affected women in the New Kuchingoro camp to some extent, especially in terms of food (OCHA Nigeria, 2017). Moreover, Chidume et al. (2018) maintain that the NCFRMI and NEMA provided humanitarian assistance to the affected

women, such as “sympathy visitations” by officials to bereaved individuals. An interview with a respondent from the NCFRMI on July 9, 2021, appears to support their finding:

Our agency equally organized several meetings and workshops to sensitize the internally displaced women in the camp on management of the situation there. These are part of the efforts of the NCFRMI and NEMA, carried out in collaboration with relevant non-government organizations and philanthropists.

However, the views of every woman interviewed contradict the above and at best suggest that the help provided by the government agencies was in the past. Their current reality was revealed in the words of an interviewee on July 23, 2021, who reiterated that many were dying from a lack of proper medical care.

A concerted effort by the NCFRMI and NEMA would have enhanced the women's coping mechanisms by helping to change their thinking about their past and present states, which would consequently have helped them with their emotional state. Hence, they would have been able to adopt positive, practical strategies for coping and survival.

It was apparent from an interview on July 28, 2021, that the Boko Haram insurgency-induced displacement started at a time of economic buoyancy in Nigeria, and for this reason it was expected that the government would have been able to take the lead, with well-planned and carefully implemented initiatives, allocating sufficient funds, and providing the experts needed for comprehensive humanitarian intervention and response. None of this, however, was forthcoming.

These women's stories, therefore, tell of abandonment by the government, belying its claim of being guided by the United Nations Convention and the African Union Convention. Moreover, the government agencies' neglect exposed these women to hunger, poverty, and ill health, which affected the government's reputation and exposed the women to sexual abuse, including rape, as indicated in an interview on July 23, 2021.

Views on the government's work in attending to the women's needs were not unanimous, however. Although most felt that all their help was from non-government agencies and philanthropists, as expressed in an FGD on July 18, 2021, some, including the leader of the women's association, insisted that, at some point, NCFRMI and NEMA had come to the rescue of the women in the camp by supplying food. The women's association leader stated the following in the course of an interview on July 20, 2021:

The agencies, both came from the government as agencies of the government on IDPs and they all helped women in various ways. They brought help when...we ran and came back, they still brought us some humanitarian assistance and support. They also came with their help around early 2015 from January to March because that was the time when women were so many in the New Kuchingoro camp.

This view was not shared by most, who had nothing good to say of their experiences with the two agencies. As a result of the loss of their livelihoods, vast numbers of women had become unemployed and virtually unemployable, affecting not only those individuals but also the national income. In addition, the women had limited access to food, which left them weak and vulnerable to disease.

NCFRMI and NEMA might have been helpful a few years previously when the possessions of many of the women, who had recently arrived in the camp, had been stolen or destroyed, and there was no livelihood for them to fall back on. As stated by one respondent in an FGD held on July 11, 2021, “It was the assistance of NCFRMI and NEMA that helped us to recover from this loss.” Other women in the camp confirmed in an FGD held on July 23, 2021, that, years previously, the government agencies had brought them food.

One group of women in the New Kuchingoro IDP camp pointed out in an FGD with on July 26, 2021, that, even though the government agencies occasionally brought help, the distribution process was unfair because the items did not extend to all the women. This was confirmed in interview on July 14, 2021: “Some got the basic amenities, but many were not so lucky.” This apparently inadequate response by the NCFRMI and NEMA shows that, even when help was forthcoming, it was poorly planned and insufficient for all the women. This observation aligns with an article

in the *Business Day* newspaper of 2020, which highlighted how the women shared their grief when the camp was given aid, yet some women received nothing (Okon, 2020).

During an FGD on July, 18, 2021, it was suggested that NCFRMI and NEMA initially gave humanitarian support, but little to nothing in recent years. Some women were quite embittered by NCFRMI and NEMA's treatment, accusing them of endangering their lives. An assistant to the Camp Administrator said bluntly in an interview on July 20, 2021, "NCFRMI and NEMA have not done anything," as she had yet to see any of them in the camp.

In contrast with the women's experiences of NCFRMI and NEMA, one interviewee stated on July 29, 2021, that the agencies' officials appeared to believe they were doing their job. An NCFRMI official conceded that their practical help had stopped because the federal government had failed to release funds but did not explain why. In addition, she alluded to the many other camps for which her agency was responsible: "We have IDP camps all over the Northern states," she said in an interview on July 2, 2021. That the agencies had other camps to attend to and therefore had to withdraw help from the New Kuchingoro camp indicates poor planning and a lack of commitment to the plight of IDPs. Moreover, not only could the women barely feed themselves and their families, it was also difficult to meet their children's educational needs. This augured badly for the future of these children, with crime being one survival option. Moreover, it was stated in an interview on July 11, 2021, that it was unacceptable that NGOs had to step in and play the role that the government was mandated to fulfil, but in fact had shown no concern for the future welfare of a generation of children, who would lack the education required to lead resilient lives, as stated in an FGD on July 23, 2021.

Besides the financial constraints facing NCFRMI and NEMA and their lack of co-ordination in managing the IDW, there appeared to be rivalry between the agencies. According to a respondent from NEMA, the rivalry affected the flow of communication, not only among the officials but also from the government to the women. As a result, the women did not know whether or when the government planned to return them to their home areas. A lack of communication also meant that the agencies could not identify and attend to the women's needs, as explained in an interview on July 4, 2021.

The women stated that NCFRMI and NEMA liked being consulted by the government and other humanitarian agencies on matters related to IDPs, but had no first-hand knowledge of their plight. In addition, the agencies seemed unwilling to co-operate with other humanitarian agencies when they felt that their input had not been adequately considered. It was apparent that, although the camp was officially announced as policy in a government gazette, it was regarded as temporary and therefore lacked the recognition normally accorded to designated permanent camps.

While tension and jockeying for power were ongoing, the situation in the camp worsened for the women. However, according to Murtala and Abubakar (2017), the NCFRMI and NEMA were unprepared to tackle the needs of the women in the camp and unable to mobilize the necessary funding, equipment, and supplies to enhance their coping and survival strategies. The two agencies had very little capacity to respond to the women's plight because they had no budget to mobilize meaningful humanitarian intervention and lacked relevant data.

It was evident that the Government of Nigeria, working through these agencies, had failed to abide by the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. This failure hindered the efficient co-ordination of interventions on behalf of the women. The principle of neutrality stipulates that humanitarian action must be free from bias, while the principle of impartiality states that aid must be given on the basis of need. The observation that the agencies had other camps to attend to (as stated by an agency official) was, therefore, an inadequate response. No IDP camp should be neglected because the government has others to attend to; rather, available humanitarian aid should be evenly distributed. Such an approach would signify respect for everyone's human rights and, importantly, compliance with the basic principles of humanitarian intervention.

It appears that the NCFRMI and NEMA requested funding only when the circumstances demanded it and engaged in little forward-thinking (Murtala & Abubakar, 2017). Government officials insisted that the status quo was as it was because agencies misappropriated funds and acted without transparency and accountability in their operations (Murtala & Abubakar, 2017). Government officials themselves noted that there were reports of corruption, the diversion of humanitarian aid, and the misuse of power among members of staff who had been part of government

service. They had been drawn from the federal civil service, with no experience or the necessary training for humanitarian activities.

Interviews with the women and agency staff revealed that women officials in the New Kuchingoro camp lacked sufficient knowledge to co-ordinate and manage the displaced women. For instance, they were unable to co-ordinate the distribution of food and other provisions effectively nor discern the women's needs. This observation was underscored by Murtala and Abubakar (2017), who maintained that their study revealed that the officials seemed unfamiliar with the operating procedures of international humanitarian agencies in terms of gender sensitivity. Some women were optimistic that they might still receive assistance; a belief that may be attributed to their knowledge that the agencies were specifically established to administer and co-ordinate humanitarian interventions and aid for their welfare, as was set out in an interview with on June 12, 2021. The conclusion from these findings is that the NCFRMI and NEMA were simply not doing their job to support the IDW in the camp, irrespective of their claims that they had other projects to address.

Corruption is an ever-present suspicion in Nigerian government agencies. According to one respondent, in an interview on June 30, 2021, the NCFRMI and NEMA had used 23 billion naira (NGN) from the NGN 55.92 billion pledged by donors since 2014 for the safe school initiative in various IDP camps. Another respondent, in an interview on June 18, 2021, said they had appropriated NGN one billion from the 2016 budget of NGN 12 billion for IDPs. The sum of five billion was appropriated from the 2015 supplementary budget for all the IDP camps in the country. Corruption within NCFRMI and NEMA seemed to be more than a suspicion.

In November 2019, the NCFRMI and NEMA organized a workshop for various aid agencies to improve humanitarian co-operation for the women in various IDP camps, including New Kuchingoro. Unfortunately, this only resulted in stricter procedures and control measures for anyone entering the camp, without any additional help for the women. Therefore, there is no doubt that the central reason the IDW lacked adequate food, medical facilities, the means of earning a living, and educational facilities for their children was the indiscriminate and constant corruption of government officials. Until the issue of corruption is addressed, the IDW and their families will continue to lack the necessities and suffer abasement in Nigeria. Consequently, it may not have been possible for them to build the resilience that would ensure a sustainable future for themselves and their children.

4.3 | Role of NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropists

NGOs played a key role in the humanitarian efforts for women in the New Kuchingoro camp, and were indeed usually at the forefront of humanitarian initiatives, saving lives, often at their own expense. They identified with the plight of the women in the camp, as many were themselves local. This sense of social connection may have spurred their regular supply of food and other items to alleviate the women's suffering and hardships. Their humanitarian interventions helped motivate the women, despite the loss of their possessions and loved ones. Essentially, these organizations did not regard the IDW as social outcasts but strove to give them a sense of belonging in Nigerian society, and also facilitated the institution of the Association of Internally Displaced Women, which operated in the camp and imparted a sense of social connection. Through this platform, the women shared their challenges and experiences of life before and since they had entered the camp.

Since the displacement of millions of women to the various camps, NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropists were visible throughout Nigeria. According to the NEMA, in an interview on June 15, 2021, NGOs provided support to 4.5 million IDPs, including nearly 2 million women monthly, in the form of food assistance and medical health services. In addition, donations were given in cash or kind by various NGOs. Apart from financial aid, they distributed food, such as millet, maize, sorghum, groundnuts, and cowpeas, as well as clothing and shelter in the form of tents. These donations attested to the enormous support mobilized for IDPs in the camp by concerned NGOs.

Throughout the study, the constant presence was observed of non-government staff who provided water, as well as sanitation and hygiene facilities, for the women. These facilities created a hygienic environment without which the IDW would have been living in absolute squalor. A woman recounted her experience with the NGOs in an interview on June 14, 2021:

We had been having several meetings with non-government agencies and religious organizations and philanthropists. They brought to us food items such as rice, maize, beans, and gave their own assistance, but I cannot remember ... some non-government agencies gave their assistance through the Red Cross. The agencies sent items like blankets, mats, rice, maize and milk which was given to the women, clothes for little children, drugs for pregnant women and the sick as well as the old women, to relieve them of the hardship and pains they incurred while escaping for their lives without their husbands.

According to the chair of the Women's Association in the camp, in an interview on July 2, 2021, an NGO came from Abuja to record the women's losses, mainly of their homes and structures. This encouraged the women, making them feel that their losses had been acknowledged, and that they still had a future. While their homes remained a life-threatening environment, the IDP camp preserved their lives and improved their mental well-being, albeit minimally, and this applied only to those who had managed to adopt positive coping strategies. There were, of course, those who had adopted destructive or negative strategies such as prostitution to survive, as described in an interview on June 7, 2021.

Apart from meeting regularly with the women, one NGO selected over 60 individuals to whom grain-grinding and sewing machines were donated. In addition, the women mentioned a large number of non-government agencies, religious organizations, and philanthropists that had come to their rescue in the past. In an interview on June 11, 2021, UNICEF, Save the Children, Action Against Hunger, and the Red Cross were named, among others. These organizations had provided them with food and shelter and had even sunk boreholes in the camp as described in an interview on June 13, 2021. This claim was in line with the view of those interviewed outside the camp, who stated that NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropists demonstrated concern for the IDPs, providing the women with roofing zinc and food.

5 | CHALLENGES FACING GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

This section highlights the specific challenges that prevent government agencies from discharging their duties in the camp and greatly hinder the work of non-government agencies.

5.1 | Lack of co-ordination provided by the NCFRMI and NEMA

In the New Kuchingoro camp, government agencies were not efficient and effective in providing food, shelter, clothing, medical supplies, water, and sanitation facilities. The expectation was that NCFRMI and NEMA would at least co-ordinate the various responses, as expressed by in an interview on June 28, 2021. As representatives of the Nigerian government mandated by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, their inability to co-ordinate humanitarian intervention and responses in the camp was a concern and a constant threat to the women, as described in an interview on June 19, 2021.

5.2 | Lack of co-ordination among NCFRMI, NEMA, NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropists

Before the establishment of the NCFRMI, the NEMA had been performing poorly in fulfilling its responsibility to provide humanitarian support and assistance. There was little co-ordination with NGOs, religious bodies, and philanthropists, and the distribution processes in the IDP camp were not well managed, as described by an NGO worker

in an interview on June 12, 2021. Although these humanitarian actors were willing to provide humanitarian assistance to the New Kuchingoro IDP camp, they were frustrated because the NEMA failed to co-operate by ensuring a co-ordinated response.

In an interview on June 12, 2021, an NGO representative stated that the situation was “a perfect storm.” A NEMA representative said in interview on July 4, 2021, that many of the women had to stay in unofficial shelters, unfinished sites, and makeshift accommodation provided by various NGOs. The fact that NGOs had to completely take over the functions assigned to government agencies was remarkable. Moreover, given the help the government agencies received from NGOs, it is equally remarkable that they seemed unwilling to play even a co-ordinating role and instead relied on the NGOs for everything to do with the women's well-being.

5.3 | Lack of up-to-date information

One of the limitations of the government was the absence of a system for tracking and keeping a census of IDW. Therefore, it was difficult for any agency, government or non-government, to carry out proper planning for these women. No agency had a strategy in place for tracking and recording these displaced women, whether living in the camp or elsewhere in Abuja, as explained in an interview on June 11, 2021. Thus, displaced women sheltered in mosques, churches, town halls, abandoned or uncompleted buildings, and makeshift places around the camp—all of which were grossly unsuitable—especially as the number of women kept increasing, as described in an interview on July 18, 2021. The lack of clear data created problems for these women; the agencies were unable to plan, and the support provided was piecemeal and insufficient for the women's needs.

In an interview on June 9, 2021, a NCFRMI representative stated that by failing to acknowledge the scale of the humanitarian emergency the government had added to the burden of non-government agencies, religious organizations, and philanthropists, which had to fill the lacuna created by the government agencies.

5.4 | Restricted access

To make matters worse, the movement of NGOs in and out of the camp was restricted, with access controlled by government agencies. The government required anyone operating in the camp to have a permit, obtained from the NCFRMI and NEMA, as described by a Camp Administrator in an interview on July 5, 2021. This created limitations for the members of all the non-government bodies, which found it difficult to move items, such as food, fuel and fertilizers (the three critical Fs for survival), into the camp for the benefit of these women, as was confirmed by a Camp Administrator in an interview on July 30, 2021.

5.5 | Government agencies' interference with the work of non-government agencies

An NCFRMI official, stated in an interview on June 8, 2021, that the non-government actors had been denied access to the camp after the government accused them of aiding and abetting prostitution and propaganda through their supply of food and medical facilities. After a high-level negotiation emphasizing the plight of the women and their desperate need for humanitarian assistance, the NGOs as well as the religious and philanthropic groups were allowed to resume activities in the camp. At another point, the religious organizations were asked to stop their humanitarian assistance and support, thus halting the distribution of certain forms of aid. According to another camp official, interviewed on July 20, 2021, the NCFRMI and NEMA went as far as confiscating supplies intended for the women on the pretext that the camp was informal and illegal. The camp official also stated that the IDW often accused the NCFRMI and NEMA of embezzling relief materials and supplies.

5.6 | Supremacy contest between the NCFRMI and NEMA

The NCFRMI and NEMA were engaged in a power tussle, each believing that they should be responsible for the implementation of the budget for the IDPs. It was, therefore, not surprising that neither agency could co-ordinate the activities of the non-government agencies and other stakeholders in the camp to ensure the efficient distribution of aid. By engaging in a power struggle, these government agencies violated the humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence. Moreover, their humanitarian actions were hampered by political interference and bias.

An NCFRMI representative maintained that his organization was the only statutory body for emergency response in the camp, while a NEMA official held the same view about his agency. The NCFMRI official pointed out in an interview on June 26, 2021, that they were the ones on the ground, understood the terrain better, and were the agency directly responsible for the women. While this dispute prevailed, humanitarian relief funds and materials meant for the IDW were misappropriated and diverted into private coffers, according to a camp official employed by the government.

For this reason, most humanitarian relief came from non-government agencies, religious organizations, and philanthropists rather than from government agencies, as explained by a Camp Administrator in an interview on July 15, 2021. Thus, the IDW became victims of the contest between the NCFRMI and NEMA and were at the receiving end of the battle for supremacy. The government's intervention in this power struggle would have ensured peace and normality in the camp. Moreover, a concerted government effort to clarify roles, allocate a sufficient budget, and stamp out corruption would have ensured that IDW received a timely and appropriate humanitarian response.

6 | POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This section examines the policies of the Nigerian government's IDP agencies compared with their actions and points out the dual regional and national approaches to humanitarian support in the country. This is because the study observed the failure of the government agencies mandated to at least co-ordinate the various responses needed, as described by a representative of NEMA in an interview on June 28, 2021. The distribution processes in the IDP camp were poorly managed, as described by an NGO representative in the course of an interview on June 12, 2021. The absence of both government agencies was evident since the women had to live in unofficial shelters, unfinished sites, and makeshift accommodation, even within the camp, as described by a representative of NEMA in an interview on July 4, 2021—an overall situation described as “*a perfect storm*,” as stated. This was a concern and posed an existential threat to the well-being of the women in the camp, as described by an NCFRMI representative in an interview on June 19, 2021).

The study also observed the almost non-existent co-ordination between government agencies and non-government agencies, religious organizations, and philanthropists. This may be attributed to the NEMA's failure in its mandate to co-operate with non-state actors. A representative of NCFRMI explained in an interview on June 9, 2021, how better co-ordination would have reduced the burden that the federal government agencies placed on non-state actors. Moreover, government officials restricted access to the camp with the condition or requirement that non-government agencies had to apply for entry permits. In addition, a Camp Administrator explained in an interview on July 20, 2021, how government agencies banned faith-based organizations from providing help and confiscated supplies intended for the women under the pretext that the camp was informal and illegal.

All this occurred despite the camp being gazetted and therefore recognized by the government. Some informants accused government agencies of doing this often, including a Camp Administrator in an interview on July 20, 2021. Their obstructive rather than facilitative actions created logistical challenges, as was again described by Camp Administrators in interviews on July 5 and July 30, 2021. The situation was so bad that, as a representative of NCFRMI described in an interview on June 8, 2021, the government was sometimes accused of aiding and abetting prostitution through the non-existent or uneven supply of food and medical supplies. The government agencies should examine their lack of co-operation with the NGOs when it came to ensuring the women's well-being, as the latter have been specially assigned to see to the welfare of displaced persons.

The government agencies showed no evidence of planning or concern for the future. If they had, they might have contracted skills providers to offer training courses for the women, thus enabling them to earn a living. This could have been followed by seed funding so that the women could start businesses with the skills they acquired.

The government agencies could also have worked on streamlining the functions of all agencies working in the camp and striven to harmonize their operations for better co-ordination and optimal performance. The function of IDP management is a national one and the activities of the two government agencies are meant to replicate those at the state and local government levels, in line with Nigeria's federal political structure. The NDMF guiding government agencies and non-state actors provides a framework for national accountability, which ought to protect citizens from the impact of displacement. Unfortunately, there was no such accountability for NCFRMI and NEMA at the time of the study.

Apart from overseeing the welfare of displaced persons, these agencies were supposed to be arranging the rehabilitation, return, and reintegration of IDPs into their home communities. Where ongoing conflict prevented this, they should have been updating the women on the prognosis, and possibly making alternative long-term arrangements, as a life lived permanently in camp conditions is not conducive to the health or the progress of the nation.

The policies governing NCFRMI and NEMA are inspired by the guidelines of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and the Sphere Minimum Standards for Humanitarian Assistance. The overall regional and national policy is to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for the realization of the rights, dignity, and well-being of vulnerable populations through the prevention of root causes, the mitigation of impact, and the achievement of durable solutions to internal displacement in Nigeria.

Currently, the Nigerian government appears to be failing to prevent the root causes, as insurgency-related violent conflict continues unabated, especially in the North East. The mitigation of its impact would be greatly aided if the agencies tasked with managing it had information on the numbers of IDW in Nigeria and in each camp. Proper data would allow for the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance for the women in the camps or elsewhere in Abuja, as explained by a NEMA representative interviewed on July 18, 2021. The study found that displaced women sheltered in mosques, churches, town halls, abandoned and incomplete buildings, and makeshift places around the camp, which points to a lack of proper documentation of the women affected by the insurgency, as confirmed by a representative of NEMA interviewed on June 11, 2021. Given the dynamics of conflict in Nigeria, it is important to document IDPs not only for planning purposes but also to minimize their number (see Tull, 2019).

Another area of concern is the power struggle between NCFRMI and NEMA over which was responsible for the emergency response, as described by an NCFRMI representative in an interview on June 26, 2021. Neither agency co-ordinated the activities of the non-government agencies, and neither could provide humanitarian assistance. The claim that they lacked funding would have been relatively easy to rectify through funding applications to the treasury or external donors—for which they would need relevant data. The study found that gender insensitivity played a part in the lack of assistance provided. The establishment of a gender unit in both NCFRMI and NEMA somewhat altered circumstances, but the approach remained deeply fragmented and politicized, as was confirmed an interview with an IDW on July 27, 2021. This also speaks to the lack of co-ordination, which the study found exacerbated the poor living conditions for women in the camp, also described by an IDW when interviewed on July 27, 2021. The scarcity of essential needs resulted in what could be termed “a secondary displacement” of the women in the camp.

The rights of the IDW under study were violated, especially in terms of the Kampala Convention, which mandates the creation of better living conditions for IDPs and the provision of basic needs to enable coping and survival. The women in the camp were malnourished (Adewale, 2016; IDMC, 2022; Ojeme, 2016), as was confirmed in an interview with an IDW on June 14, 2021. In further interviews in June and July 2021, IDWs spoke of numerous cases of food items and humanitarian relief being diverted by government officials for personal use (Faluyi et al., 2019). In an interview on June 26, 2021, an IDW spoke of impostors disguising themselves as non-state actors and sourcing financial aid from international donors on the pretext of serving the interests of the displaced women. All this contributed to poor conditions for the women in the camp.

7 | CONCLUSION

The unsatisfactory treatment of refugees and IDPs across Africa is huge, with external agencies mainly assisting refugees, leaving those who are internally displaced to suffer neglect at the hands of incompetent state agencies. This was the case in Somalia and Rwanda during the 1990s. As far as humanitarian assistance for the IDPs in Nigeria is concerned, any programme of support should simultaneously seek to address the underlying causes of the displacement. In other words, the Boko Haram insurgency is a profound problem confronting society in Northern Nigeria, requiring more than a political solution for the women to return home safely.

The evils of corruption and incompetence must be addressed to prevent the circumstances of IDW in camps like the one in the study from deteriorating further. The challenge is for the Nigerian government to demonstrate care for its citizens in fighting the war against terror and in managing those displaced by war. The government must pay attention to the long-term consequences of allowing large swathes of the population to remain disenfranchised, materially reduced, and economically helpless. In addition, the government needs to begin planning for the proper care, management, and rehabilitation of IDPs. Currently, one cannot but conclude that the Nigerian government pays only lip service to human rights and the international treaties to which it is a signatory.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This article reports analysis of primary data. The ethics of data collection and analysis was approved by the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee Reference Number 20630086(HUM016/0420). The persons from whom the data was collected gave their free, prior, and informed consent, the data have been kept confidential and anonymized.

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