

Addressing the Plights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria: A Christian Response

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Abstract

Nigeria has witnessed relative deterioration of its internal security in recent times. This has led to the displacement of millions of Nigerians especially in the Northern part of the country. This paper examined noticeable activities of churches and Christian Organizations aimed at ameliorating the plights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. The researcher carried out field work in three selected IDPs camps in Nigeria. The camps are New Kuchingoro camp, Durumi Area One camp both in Abuja, and Ugbokpo camp in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Findings show that the major problems confronting displaced Nigerians are lack of food, problem of shelter, poor health care, poor access to education, and lack of access to clean water supply. Churches and other Christian Organizations have been in the forefront of rendering humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons in the country. They have provided food aids, shelter and non-food items, medical services, educational scholarships, as well as psychological assistance through counselling and prayers. The author recommends among others the need for synergy among churches and church organizations in rendering humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons.

Keywords: Christian Response, Internally Displaced Persons, Nigeria, Plights

Introduction

In recent times there has been the emergence of international and academic concerns to the problem of forced population movement and displacement. Conflicts force people to leave their homes and one of the measures of severity of a conflict in addition to casualties and duration, according to Weiss and Korn (2006) is the extent to which people have been displaced from their communities. The intensity of internal displacement arising from different factors, which include conflicts and natural disasters, has become a global phenomenon. It has emerged as one of the greatest human tragedies of the 21st century. The Norwegian Refugee Council (2009) estimated that at the end of 2008, 26 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were found across the countries of the world. The figure rose to 27 million at the end of 2009, and 27.5 million at

the end of 2010. The estimated figure at the end of 2012 was 28.8 million (NRC, 2010, 2011, 2013).

Nigeria is not left out in the problem of internal displacement. There is no doubt that Nigeria is a country made up of an extremely complex web of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Internal displacement is a common consequence of Nigerian inter-communal and political violence, flooding and forced evictions. Irrespective of the cause of the displacement, the phenomenon always leaves a negative socio-economic footprint on those affected.

Available statistics show that at the end of 2014 there were 3.3 million IDPs in Nigeria as a result of *Boko Haram* attacks, communal and religious violence in the middle belt, flooding, cattle rustling and competitions for resources. From this statistics, Nigeria was the home of the largest

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Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and the third in the world, after Syria (6.5 million) and Columbia (5.7 million) (Ayankola, 2015). However, recent statistics released by the UNOCHA shows that as of May, 2016 a total of 2.6 million people have been displaced in the Northern part of Nigeria as a result of *Boko Haram* mayhem and communal clashes. The figure of the displaced persons still remained at over 2 million as at June, 2017 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2016, 2017). Consequently, the country is faced with the challenge of responding to the needs of the internally displaced population instead of pursuing other developmental projects that can project her strength internationally.

Scholars have researched on how the country and the international community should and have responded to the needs of the displaced persons. However, not much has been done on how Christian churches have responded to the needs of the Internally Displaced Persons. It is against this background that this study sought to address the Christian churches' response to the plights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria, with the view to proffering solutions to the problems.

Challenges faced by the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

The Internally Displaced Persons experience difficulty in meeting their essential food and non-food needs. They are in dire need of the very basics of life, as they live in the midst of hunger, disease and very poor water sanitation and hygiene with poor or no education facilities for their children.

The Problem of Food

Having fled their homes without time to pack food, the displaced people are faced with the problem of how to access food for their daily upkeep. The IDPs are in dire need of food for their survival. Although the government is making some provisions for food for the IDPs through its agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), such assistance seems like a drop in the ocean. The situation is very severe such that some IDPs are dying of hunger and starvation. P. Emmanuel (personal communication, February 16, 2017) confirmed that many of the IDPs, particularly children, have died from malnutrition in the New Kuchingoro camp. About 28 died between 2015 and 2016. This is in line with what Ocholi (2016) said about the level of the food crisis being faced by IDPs across the country. According to him, "the IDPs have been facing food crisis of monumental dimension, leading to malnutrition, starvation and even death among them" (p. 2).

The level of food scarcity in most IDPs' camps is such that

many of them feed once a day. To confirm the situation, Mrs. Terlumum Agber, an internally displaced person in Ugbokpo IDPs' camp in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State said that "things are really bad in the camp. There is no food, even to eat once a day is a problem. We are really suffering here" (T. Agber, personal communication, May 20, 2016). This is in line with the assertions by Beyani (2016) and Abdulazeez (2016). According to Beyani (2016), in the IDPs' camps, food is scarce and many survive on one basic meal per day. Abdulazeez (2016) noted that "government officials say they feed displaced people three times a day with assorted nutritional meals. But in reality people are usually fed only once a day and they eat the same things everyday" (p. 2). In the same vein, Ogundamisi (2015), in an open letter to Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, Nigeria's Vice President, had observed that the food provided for the displaced people is sadly insufficient and does not meet the nutritional requirements for proper growth and development of young children or the sustenance of adults.

The scarcity of food in the camps has led to other life threatening effects. Malnutrition has become very pronounced especially among children in different camps. Children who arrived in the camps with other health conditions are exhibiting worrying signs of malnutrition; which include stunting, underweight and wasting (I. I. Aliyu, personal communication, February 16, 2017). This is supported by reports from UNICEF and Medicine San Frontiers. According to UNICEF (2015);

Alarming rates of malnutrition have been observed in the camps. In some camps, screenings among newly arrived children reveal global acute malnutrition rates of 18 percent, which is above the emergency threshold of 15 percent (p. 9).

Officials of Medicine San Frontiers, otherwise known as Doctors Without Borders, had, recently reported that there was acute malnutrition and food crisis at various camps (Ndahi, 2016).

Problem of Shelter

Shelter as a basic structure or building that provides protection from bad weather and danger in the environment is one of the basic needs of man. Immediate temporary shelter for newly displaced persons and long term shelter for the growing IDPs population in different camps are part of the primary needs of displaced persons in Nigeria. Having fled their homes, the displaced persons are faced with the problem of accommodation in their different places of settlement. In such a difficult condition, the IDPs resort to the use of uncompleted buildings and make-shift structures for their accommodation.

The most common types of accommodation used by IDPs

in Nigeria are schools and government buildings. Others include tents and bunk houses. They also live in churches, mosques, town halls, abandoned and uncompleted buildings. Most of the make-shift shelters were constructed by the IDPs themselves. Some of such houses are made of grasses and sticks and covered with waterproof or tarpaulin. While some were made up of used cement bags and wooden planks.

The researcher observed that there is inadequate shelter in IDPs' camps to accommodate the victims, and many shelters have been damaged or destroyed and needed to be rehabilitated. At the Area One Durumi IDPs' camp for example, the make-shift shelters were covered with nylon and were leaking since they have become old; begging for rehabilitation. Most of the IDPs therefore face acute accommodation problem as there are not enough houses to accommodate them. Images 1 and 2 below show different kinds of makeshift shelters in IDPs' camps in Nigeria.



Image 1. Makeshift shelter at Durumi IDPs' Camp

Source: Researcher



Image 2. Makeshift shelter at New Kuchingoro IDPs' Camp

Source: Researcher

The researcher observed that many of the communal and make-shift shelters are overcrowded and unsuitable in terms of water and sanitation facilities, cooking and privacy, especially for women. This is supported by Aloba and Obaji (2016) who noted that IDPs' make-shift shelters are inadequate and unsuitable for accommodating the surge in displaced populations. This explains the regularity of hygiene related epidemics in camps.

The increasing number of IDPs living in inadequate public or private shelters indicates that the coping mechanisms of both IDPs and host communities have become overstretched. Lack of clear mechanism to monitor and track the displaced people living with host communities/ families hinders proper planning for humanitarian assistance.

Poor Healthcare

One of the groups in the society that have special health issues are the Internally Displaced Persons. Internal displacement has significant effects on public health and the well-being of the affected population. These impacts may be categorized as direct due to violence and injury or indirect such as increased rates of infectious diseases and malnutrition. This is in line with Owoaje et al (2016)'s assertion that "several risk factors, which promote communicable diseases, work in synergy during displacement". These factors include movement of mass populations and resettlement in temporary locations, overcrowding, economic and environmental degradation, poverty, inadequacy of safe water, or poor sanitation and waste management. These conditions are further compounded by the absence of shelter, food shortages and poor access to healthcare. The combined effects of these factors result in increased risk of diseases such as acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, malaria and measles.

Internally displaced persons in Nigeria suffer from different communicable and non-communicable diseases. The prevalent communicable diseases include: malaria, diarrhea, cough, and measles. The high prevalence rates of these communicable diseases could be attributed to environmental factors such as poor waste disposal and environmental sanitation, overcrowding, inadequate access to water supply and healthcare services. The researcher observed that poor hygiene within the camp could set the IDPs on a time bomb. Sanitation is zero as few toilets provided by the government are in a sorry state. The offensive odour oozing out of the camps is a pointer to the poor attitude of the IDPs to hygiene.

One of the non-communicable diseases suffered by displaced persons in Nigeria is mental health problem. Mental health problems suffered by the IDPs include

depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSDs). This is expected because most displaced persons in Nigeria were affected by conflict. According to Owoaje et al (2016);

IDPs, particularly those affected by conflict are at a high risk of mental health problems. The commonly reported psychological reactions are post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs) in reaction to violence and depression as a reaction to loss. Other types of mental health problems which have been reported are panic attacks and anxiety disorders (p. 162).

In New Kuchingoro IDPs' camp, P. Emmanuel (personal communication, February 16, 2017) said that many persons were suffering from high blood pressure. This situation could have been a result of trauma due to the insurgency crisis that led to their displacement. This situation is similar to what Isaac (2016) had observed. According to him;

The IDPs are traumatized and frustrated because of the situation they find themselves. Most of them live in bitterness due to painful separation from their spouses, families and loved ones (p. 5).

The psychological distress occurring in the post-conflict environment can also contribute to harmful health behaviours such as hazardous drinking and increased smoking. These behaviours are linked to an increased burden of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancer (Roberts et al, 2012).

In the IDPs' camps visited, the researcher observed that healthcare availability is less frequent. IDPs in the camps mostly depend on mobile clinics and herbs for their health needs. When asked about the kind of treatment they receive in the camps, the IDPs interviewed at Durumi and New Kuchingoro camps complained that they were given the same drugs for virtually all types of sicknesses (D. Sule, A. Gando, A. Yusuf, and H. Murtala, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Sick women and children in the camp rely on local concoctions made with herbs from nearby bushes. Hannatu Mohammed, who said her daughter recently recovered from malaria using the concoctions, attested to the efficacy of the herbal solutions. According to her;

Many sick people in the camp depend on herbal drinks in the absence of orthodox medicines. We do not have drugs to use here because it has been quite a while since the good Samaritans that used to bring us drugs and other things came to us. I had to drink herbal solutions when I had malaria last month

(H. Mohammed, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Poor Education

It is estimated that "1.5 million children from the ages of 0-15 years are displaced and currently eking out a difficult living in various IDPs' camps spread across Adamawa, Borno, Yobe and the FCT" (Haruna et al, 2016, p. 5). One of the problems encountered by displaced children and adolescents is poor education.

The widespread destruction of educational facilities left conflict-affected host communities and returnees without functional schools and with no teaching and learning materials. The situation is more critical for IDPs in both camps and host communities. The absence of teachers in general and of teachers trained to deal with massive psychosocial aftermath of the insurgency is also hindering the resumption of education activities. Most of the children, especially of the school-going age, cannot have normal access to education. Gloria James, an IDP from Borno State who lived with her children in New Kuchingoro IDPs' camp in FCT Abuja, shared her daughter's inability to attend school in Abuja due to the cost of going to school in the city. She said;

My daughter had been yearning to return to school but Abuja school is too expensive. I do not have money to send her to school in Abuja, because things are very costly here (G. James, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

In Durumi camp, the only educational centre is now a shadow of itself. Investigation showed that enrolment rate of the school had drastically reduced from about 900 to 300 pupils. Some IDPs attributed this reduction in the enrolment of children to a lot of factors such as poor feeding condition, inadequate teaching staff, and poor funding (Z. Ibrahim, S. Ismail, personal communication, February 16, 2017). The Coordinator of the camp, Idris Ibrahim Aliyu, disclosed that the makeshift school which now has a population of about 300 lacks teachers and the basic teaching materials. According to him;

The school lacks teaching aids like textbooks, markers, writing materials and so on. It previously had about 11 volunteer teachers, but now has only three volunteer staff, due to inadequate finance. Sadly too, there is no provision for Secondary education within the facility for the pupils who will graduate from primary six soon which means an obvious drop out and joining their peers to roam about the camp aimlessly (I. I. Aliyu, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Image 3 below shows a makeshift school at Durumi camp.



Image 3. Makeshift School at Durumi IDPs' camp

Source: Researcher

Such is the condition of many displaced children and adolescents in different camps in the country, even though Rhoades (2010) had argued that;

Education for Internally Displaced Persons is essential, both as a human right enshrined in international law and as a component of the peace building process (p. 6).

Continuous neglect of the educational needs of the displaced children will negatively affect sustainable peace and long-term development of the displaced persons in the country.

Christian Churches' Responses to the Plights of the IDPs in Nigeria

Since the heightening of the effect of displacement of people from their homes by *Boko Haram* insurgents and armed Fulani herdsmen mostly in the northern part of the country, so much has been done by various churches and Christian Organizations with respect to the welfare of the internally displaced persons. Consequent upon these massive displacements, the churches and Christian Organizations had embarked on the distribution of relief materials, housing and taking care of the health needs of the Internally Displaced Persons. Humanitarian response has been the attitude of the church over the years; hence Ferris (2005) stated that;

Long before international humanitarian law was formalized in treaty law, individuals and faith communities provided assistance to those afflicted by natural disaster, persecution, uprooting and war (p. 313).

The researcher observed that churches in Nigeria have been very active in rendering humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons in the country.

Christian Response to the Problem of Food

Due to the difficulty in assessing food by the IDPs, churches

and Christian Organizations have made the donation of food one of their priority relief materials in their efforts to addressing the needs of the IDPs.

On June 21, 2016 the Catholic Archdiocese of Ibadan visited the Internally Displaced Persons camped at the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Centre in Maiduguri, Borno State, and donated food items to the IDPs. (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2016). Image 4 below shows the distribution of relief materials to IDPs by the Catholic Bishops of Ibadan.



Image 4. Visit of Catholic Bishops of Ibadan to IDPs in Maiduguri

Source: http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=...

In the same vein, Aderonke (2015) reported the donation of food items to IDPs in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State, by the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos with support from the Christian Aid. The Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri has also embarked on distribution of food items to the Internally Displaced Persons in Borno State. According to Obasogie (2016) close to 30 distributions of food items have been accomplished so far. These distributions were carried out in various camps, churches/distribution centres.

On Sunday, March 1, 2015 the leadership of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Garki visited the IDPs' camp in Area One, Abuja and donated food items in support of the Internally Displaced Persons (Nwabughogu, 2015). The Salvation Army Church also donated relief materials including foodstuff to the Internally Displaced Persons in New Kuchingoro camp in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. (Mefor, 2015). According to Attiah (2015) about 1,500 IDPs, mostly women and children received 25 kilograms bags of maize, cooking oil and seasoning at St. Theresa's Cathedral, Yola. It was estimated that the materials would last about two weeks for a household. On January 12, 2016 the Word and Spirit Assembly Church donated food items and other relief materials to IDPs in Abuja (Okunbor, 2016). On Wednesday, July 6, 2016, the Christ Evangelical Intercessory Fellowship Ministry of Nigeria in Kaduna distributed over 1,000 packaged food and drinks

to Internally Displaced Persons (News Agency of Nigeria, 2016b). Other Christian Organizations such as the Christian Aid, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Caritas have attended to the food needs of the IDPs in different camps in Nigeria. Image 5 below shows the distribution of food items to IDPs by the Christian Aid.



Image 5. Distribution of Relief Materials to IDPs by Christian Aid

Source: <http://bepartofthemiracle.org.za/nigeria-internally-...>

Christian Response to the Problem of Shelter and Non-Food Items

Churches and Christian organizations are not relenting in providing for the shelter needs as well as other non-food materials needed by the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. Churches have responded to the shelter needs of the displaced Nigerians by accommodating them in their church buildings as well as providing mosquito nets and other protective items for IDPs in different camps. Many IDPs, especially in the North eastern part of the country seek refuge in churches. In Borno State, the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri “has been able to house some members and pay accommodation fees/rent for people who needed them the most” (Obasogie, 2016, p. 2). The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has also provided shelter for a good number of displaced persons in the Maiduguri CAN centre (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2016).

Also, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria also known as Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN) has provided shelter for many Internally Displaced Persons in Maiduguri (Gamache & Kindy, 2015, p. 5). As at February, 2014 about 19,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who escaped *Boko Haram* insurgency in North East Nigeria, were taking refuge at EYN church in Jos, Plateau State capital (Mac, 2015). This indeed shows how Churches and Christians in the

northern part of the country have been striving to help and accommodate the displaced Nigerians not minding the discomfort associated with accommodating such large crowd.

Another way Churches and organizations help displaced persons in ameliorating the problem of shelter among the IDPs is through the donation of non-food items such as clothing, blanket and mosquito nets. During a 45-day humanitarian intervention project to the displaced persons in the north central States of Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau, the Christian Aid through its partners provided life saving support to identified IDPs. The project specifically provided “food security, WASH services, non-food items and shelter support to the people” (Christian Aid, 2015, p. 1). Protective items provided for the IDPs during the project included slippers, wrappers, pants, clothes for children and women, blankets, and sleeping mats.

Christian Response to the Problem of Poor Healthcare and Education

Churches and Christian Organizations in their bid to ameliorate the plights of the Internally Displaced Persons have provided healthcare and education assistance to the displaced people. The Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri for instance “has been able to attend to the health of the Internally Displaced Persons where possible paying up their hospital bills” (Obasogie, 2016, p. 2). Also, the Redeemed Christian Church of God “treated Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria in Maiduguri of medical cases of malaria, hypertension and diabetes” (Sesan, 2016, p. 3). On August 18, 2015, Prophet T.B. Joshua of the Synagogue Church of All Nations donated ₦10 million to the Internally Displaced Persons in New Kuchingoro camp, Abuja. The money was dedicated to solving the healthcare and educational problems in the camp (Ahon, 2015).

The prevalence of diseases in IDPs camps is a result of poor sanitation and hygiene in the camps. Need assessment conducted by Christian Aid revealed that IDPs and members of the host communities have poor levels of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) knowledge, attitude and practices, thus, placing them at serious health risks. With the recognition that improving this requires behaviour change, learning, promotion and adoption of practical skills, Christian Aid in partnership with local actors constituted WASH committees within all the target communities (Christian Aid, 2015). There was also a sensitization programme by Jireh Doo Foundation in Nasarawa and Benue States, which covered environmental cleanliness and the importance of ending open defecation. In the programme, there were practical sessions on hand washing, how to use long lasting insecticide nets and water care use. A total of 6 latrines,

4 in Benue and 2 in Nasarawa were constructed in some identified camps that lacked latrines as means to ending open defecation and reducing chances of childhood illness like cholera (Jireh Doo Foundation, 2015).

On education, a Catholic school in Abuja, Praxis Catholic e-school recently awarded scholarship to 300 children of Internally Displaced Persons from 14 camps in Abuja and Nasarawa State. One of the beneficiaries, Usman Adamu called for government support, adding that such gesture had never happened since they got to the camp. He expressed happiness to be back to school, adding that he would be admitted into SS1, while calling on Nigerians to support the Praxis initiative (News Agency of Nigeria, 2016a). In the same vein, the Pastor of Alpha and Omega Fire Ministry Int'l, Yakubu Samaila Bauchi offered scholarships to secondary schools level for 30 children of *Boko Haram* victims as well as children of communal crisis who have lost either of their parents (Garba, 2016).

Spiritual welfare of the IDPs

Churches also attend to the spiritual needs of the IDPs through Sunday worship, prayers and counselling. At the Durumi camp in Abuja, there was a temporary structure constructed by a concerned Christian for Christian worship. In the structure, different Christian bodies hold their Sunday worship one after the other on Sundays. Usually, the Catholic Church holds her early morning Mass before other churches take their turn for Sunday worship (I. I. Aliyu, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

According to P. Alumuku (personal communication, February 17, 2017) the Catholic Church discovered the need to attend to the spiritual needs of the IDPs and decided to establish a Mass Centre at the camp. The first Mass at the IDPs' camp was said on 18th September 2016, by Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Bala. The Mass was followed by confessions and personal contacts with some of the victims. Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Udoh also said Mass on 25th September and 2nd October 2016 followed by confessions too. The church at the camp has a choir, Legion of Mary and a Catechism class. Consequent upon the establishment of a Mass Centre at the camp, some Catholics who live around the area and attended other churches for convenience were then coming back and expressing delight at having the Catholic Mass close to them. The spiritual assistance rendered by the church has been appreciated by the inmates of the camp. According to the Women Leader of Durumi camp, Ayuba Layatu;

The Reverend Fathers who conduct Mass here have been helping us and have been giving us words of encouragement. When one of the Christians here was murdered by a Muslim and fellow inmate, over a minor argument about an old

handset, one of the Reverend Fathers led the Catholic family to pay a condolence visit to the widow. They consoled and prayed for her and encouraged us to remain strong and be our brothers' keepers (L. Ayuba, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Also, other churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Anglican Church conducts Sunday services at the camps. During the service, the churches provide spiritual assistance to the IDPs through sermons, prayers, and counseling. According to Pastor Kola Bawo, pastor in-charge of the RCCG Bethel Assembly Parish, Abuja, "the church does not only provide material assistance to the victims but also offers spiritual services through different programmes such as prayers, sermons, music evangelism and counseling" (K. Bawo, personal communication, February 19, 2017). The RCCG has a team that serves as an interface between her and the IDPs. Recently because of the IDPs, the church has Hausa dialect session where there is an interpretation of the English language to their indigenous dialect. Also, the church has embarked on a solar powered IT facility that translates messages and also provides a platform for the IDPs to listen to music in their dialect (P. Onachi, personal communication, February 19, 2017). In the same vein, the Anglican Church sends preachers to the camps on regular basis to preach and encourage the displaced people because they need encouragement and should not be abandoned in their suffering (F. Nwafili, personal communication, February 18, 2017).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be synergy among Churches and Church organizations in rendering humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons. This will help Churches mobilize enough resources in assisting the Internally Displaced Persons.
2. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) should mobilize churches to raise enough funds that should target the solution of at least one of the problems of the IDPs. This will help to ensure the solution of such problem instead of occasional visits by Churches to Internally Displaced Persons which its effects only lasts for a short period.
3. The Christian Association of Nigeria should open a single account where all the member Churches should donate their Sunday offerings for a given period of time. Funds pulled from this arrangement should be used for the welfare of the Internally Displaced Persons.
4. The financial and logistics requirements for catering for displaced persons especially those in camps are

enormous. This calls for synergy between government and Churches in rendering assistance to the IDPs.

5. There is also the need for Churches to cooperate with international donor agencies in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the IDPs. This will help Churches in raising enough funds for catering for the needs of the IDPs.
6. Government should support Churches and Church Organizations that have the interest of the Internally Displaced Persons at heart. Government should release funds meant for the assistance of IDPs to such Churches. This will help reduce mismanagement and ensure the delivery of relief materials to the IDPs.
7. Churches should embark on programmes that will lead to peaceful resolution of conflicts in the affected areas. This will help to address the root-cause of displacement which is conflict.

Conclusion

Among other factors, the growing level of violent attacks in Northern Nigeria has led to the increase in the number of displaced persons in Nigeria. This has led to the establishment of camps for the displaced persons by the government. Apart from the government organized IDPs' camps; there are many others that are organized by the displaced people themselves, while many others migrated to peaceful parts of the country. Although, the responsibility of catering for the welfare of the displaced persons lies on the government, the situation has gone out of hand such that the displaced persons are suffering untold hardship. This calls for support from other non-governmental organizations including Religious bodies.

The Christian Religion was founded on love and care for the poor and less privileged in the society. Hence churches and different church organizations have waded into the problems affecting displaced persons in Nigeria, with a view to ameliorating their plights. Displaced persons in different IDPs' camps in the country suffer lack of food, shelter problem, and poor healthcare, poor access to education, lack of access to clean water supply, human rights violation and psychological trauma amongst others. Despite limited resources, churches have demonstrated seriousness in assisting displaced persons through their different organizations and institutions. They have provided food aids, shelter and non-food items, medical and educational services among others. It is important to observe that the poor condition of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria reflects the bad condition in which millions of Nigerians live today. There is poverty, poor health and educational services, food insecurity, and malnutrition across the country. Churches should therefore speak up against government policies that breed corruption, poverty,

unemployment and wide spread suffering in the country. Through this, things can change for better in the land.

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