

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT CAMPS TO SUSTAINABILITY LESSONS IN NIGERIA

By December 2018, a report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Council (IDMC) Africa recorded approximately that Africa has 17.8 million displaced persons. Internal displacement is caused by a variety of factors such as climate change, ethnic conflict, insecurity, and humanitarian crisis.

In Nigeria, internal displacement caused by insecurity and humanitarian crisis is in its 10th year. At 2.2 million, Nigeria accounts for the continent's highest rates, more than the population of Gabon of persons living as displaced persons. To mitigate vulnerabilities, the Nigerian government with support from international humanitarian agencies set up and are managing various displacement camps. The majority of this demography are presently living in these displacement camps typically located in north-eastern Nigeria where the majority of the conflict based displacement is taking place. Currently, these areas are still conflicted zones due to the Boko Haram terrorist group.

A 2019 comparative report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on access to basic services in displacement camps between Nigeria and Ethiopia suggests that in Nigeria, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are living in harsh conditions; lacking access to basic services. As a result, many of these demography are formulating a survival strategy that includes mass migration from camps into cities (IDMC, 2019). Roberts and Okanya (2018) propose new informal settlements in cities are set-up by this key population. Such finding makes incorporating cities as an integral part of durable solutions a necessity.

A new report by Roberts and Okanya (2020) examines the living conditions of IDP migrants in four Nigerian cities. This case-study proposes that internal displacement in Nigeria is shaping migration patterns and urbanization and therefore, cities must be included as a crucial part of durable solutions to displacement. It suggests a huge data deficit on the self-help strategies of IDP migrants and recommends the following:

- **Decentralized Resettlement Interventions:** the main focus currently is a centralized approach by the Federal government to maintain IDP camps as well as assisted returns of IDPs to the previous habitation. The ongoing conflict in north-east Nigeria implies that the current approach is unrealistic. The self-help migration of IDPs from the camps into the cities mandates that interventions for this target population should be decentralized to involve state, local government as well as non-state actors that would make such resettlement approach more sustainable.
- **Document and Analyze the steps, trends, and outcomes:** Data on this class of city newcomers are not readily available. In order to properly support such an effort, there is a need for extensive research on the processes of such migration in order for interventions to be based on scientific data.
- **Develop a People (beneficiaries) Centered Interventions Framework:** Support and interventions for this target population should be based on the recommendations of the beneficiaries themselves. This is important because they know their realities and their preferences would ensure that such interventions are sustainable.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** In cities, various non-state actors currently support this

group in unstructured ways and therefore would have key lessons to inform intervention processes, therefore, these various groups should be included in the planning and implementation of such efforts.

- **Technical Support for Preferred Host Communities:** The prevalent factor prompting IDPs to end up as homeless people in cities and eventually set up the new informal shelters is due to the discrimination against this population in existing urban slums and established informal settlements (Roberts and Okanya, 2018). The 2020 case-study by Roberts and Okanya proposes that to curb such discrimination, it is critical for intervention strategies to include engagement of preferred destination for IDP migrants, as well as with the communities that they migrate to. It also suggests that technical support should be offered for such integration as well as creating incentives for states and communities to accept IDP migrants. For example, the incentive, in this case, could be the provision of access to safe and clean water for communities that host IDPs in cities.

- **Highlight and Sustain focus on IDP migration and urban Integration:** Various evidence points to the high migration of internally displaced people into cities, therefore, such realities should adjust to accommodate this shift. Also, intervention should be designed across the migration of this key population to cities, the unique challenges facing them in such processes as well as in cities for informed recommendations.

These recommendations are important because the sustenance of internal displacement camps are costing the national government as well as international communities millions of dollars annually. Secondly, in the long term, internal displacement camps could create a dependency on the system; making it more difficult for IDPs to return to normalcy. that neither funders would be difficult to stop. Lastly, in broader perspectives, the IDPs in camps represent a huge human resources waste whose contribution is necessary for economic growth and sustainable development of Nigeria.