

REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY ON INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In 2012, after the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of guiding principles for the prevention and management of internally displaced persons all over the world in 1998, and its adoption by the West African States in 2006, and by the African Union in October 2009, the question of the need for a national policy on internally displaced persons in Nigeria became louder than ever. The need became even clearer the number of IDPs in different parts of the nation was on the increase, daily exploited, abused and neglected. More so, the impact of internal displacement on IDPs and host communities, which include lack of access to the basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter, etc., and the overstretching of social basic amenities which begins to breed tension between the IDPs and the host communities. In the absence of a policy of this kind, the response to the root causes and plight of IPDs was fragmented, uncoordinated, very poor and ineffective. Based on these considerations, the federal government adopted the national policy on internal displaced persons in Nigeria in October 2012. This paper is written to review on policy document in relation to its commitment and effectiveness in regard to the course of the internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Thus, the critical method of inquiry would be adopted for the purpose of this research.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons, Nigeria, Review, National, Policy, Framework

Introduction

In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of guiding principles for the prevention and management of internally displaced persons all over the world. From 26th to 28th April 2006, the United Nations guiding principles were adopted in Abuja by West African nations during the First Conference of West African States on internal displacements. Ten years later, the United Nations guiding principles set the foundation for the African Union Convention for Assistance and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons which was adopted in October 2009 by the African Union's Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Kampala, Uganda. These developments in Africa and the world formed the

background for the development of national policy on internally displaced persons in Nigeria by the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The need for a policy document on internally displaced persons became very fundamental with the increasing number of IDPs scattered all over the federation from a multiplicity of causes: ethnic and religious violence, natural disasters, Fulani and herdsmen conflicts, government forces and armed group conflicts, post election violence, etc. This became even more important as it has become obvious that internally displaced persons are among the most vulnerable populations, susceptible to all kinds of exploitations, abuse and neglect. More so, the impact of internal displacement on IDPs and host communities, which include lack of access to the basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter, etc., and the overstressing of social basic amenities which begins to breed tension between the IDPs and the host communities. In the absence of a policy of this kind, the response to the root causes and plight of IPDs was fragmented, uncoordinated, very poor and ineffective. Based on these considerations, the federal government adopted the national policy on internal displaced persons in Nigeria.

Policy Thrust

The policy document seeks to address all causes of migration, all groups, needs, phases, levels, areas of concern and rights as regards internally displaced persons¹. It has the vision of “an equitable and stable Nigerian society that is proactive and responsive to emergency situations that could lead to internal displacement, where the right to a life of dignity is guaranteed for all internally displaced persons and where adequate measures and durable solutions exist to prevent and mitigate the impact of internal displacement on vulnerable populations”²; it has the mission of seeking “to provide a framework for national accountability and responsibility to protect and promote the rights of internally displaced persons, families and host communities as well as adopt strategic measures for coordinated gender-sensitive response to all types and phases of internal

¹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 19-20

² National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 20

displacement in Nigeria”³. It further has the overall objective of strengthening institutional mechanisms and framework for the protection of the rights, dignity and wellbeing of vulnerable persons through addressing the root causes, impact and seeking solutions to internal displacement⁴.

The policy document is anchored on general principles that are fundamental to its implementation. These principles include: respect for the Nigerian sovereignty, especially when national capacity to intervene is inadequate, international agencies must respect the sovereignty of Nigeria. The second is the principle of gender equality, which calls for equal protection of men’s and women’s rights, however paying more attention to women’s rights because of their vulnerability. The third is the principle of empowerment, which holds that assistance to IDPs must be to save life, support livelihood and reduce vulnerability. The fourth is the principle of participation, which holds that the IDPs and their host communities should be carried along when designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating interventions. The fifth is the principle of accountability, which involves opening and responsibility for resources and actions⁵.

Apart from the general principles, there are also humanitarian principles which need to be observed. The first is the principle of humanity and humanitarian imperative, which requires affected person to be treated with dignity. They are to be seen as human beings rather than some vulnerable helpless victims requiring assistance. The second is the principle of neutrality, which involves not taking sides. The third humanitarian principle is the principle of impartiality and non-discrimination. It involves giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, etc. There is also the principle of independence. Humanitarian agencies must act independently and not be used as instruments by external forces for gathering of information, among others. The last is the principle of protection from harm and abuse. It is a

³ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p.20

⁴ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 20-21

⁵ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 21-22

responsibility humanitarian agencies need to keep in mind if the vision of the policy document would be realized⁶.

Rights and Obligations of Internally Displaced Persons

The third chapter of the policy document focuses on the rights and obligations of the IDPs. They have general right such as, the rights contained in the Constitution of Nigeria, statutes and domesticated sub-regional, regional and international human rights and humanitarian instruments which other citizens are entitled to. They have a right to seek safety request and receive protection⁷.

They have specific rights such as, rights to protection from arbitrarily displacement; right to protection and assistance during and after displacement, this includes rights to physical security and integrity, basic necessities, civil and political rights, economic, social, cultural rights and rights to restoration of property including land⁸; internally displaced children shall also have the right to his or her name, proper upbringing, education, inheritance, traditional titles, etc. The rights of women must also be protected; her rights to sanctity, privacy, dignity, freedom to choose who to marry, hold positions of authority, financial assistance, own property, self-development, etc⁹. Included are the rights of those with disability. They have a right to modified physical environment, mobility devices, training and specialized medical care, access to information, education, priority attention in service delivery¹⁰. The rights of internally displaced persons living with HIV (PLHIV) needs to be protected as well, and under no circumstance are they to be discriminated against. This also applies to other persons with contagious and infectious disease. There are also the rights of elderly persons, which include rights to identification, documentation,

⁶ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp.23-24

⁷ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 25-26

⁸ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 27-29

⁹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 32-33

¹⁰ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 33-34

protection, provision, healthcare, transportation, water, shelter, etc¹¹. Among the rights are rights to voluntary return, local integration and relocation¹².

This chapter of the policy document focuses not only on the rights of internally displaced persons but also on their obligations. As human beings we not only have rights, but we also have obligations towards the same society that ensures our rights. Internally displaced persons have an obligation to be law abiding citizens, and shall take responsibility for individual and collective crimes committed, under national and international laws or as defined in the national or state laws. They also have a responsibility to respect the culture and norms of host communities and the rules and regulations in collective settlements¹³.

Responsibilities of Government, Humanitarian Agencies, Host Communities and Armed Groups to IDPs

The obligations and responsibilities of government is based on the fact that she is the primary duty bearer with the responsibility of protecting internally displaced persons. The package of protection must be responsive, aimed at preventive or stopping violations; it is also remedial, aimed at providing redress; and environment building aimed at providing the necessary legal and institutional framework, capacity building and awareness necessary for the promotion of human rights. International human rights law also imposes on the government a threefold obligation: the obligation to respect human rights, obligation to protect human rights and the obligation to fulfill these rights¹⁴.

Taking the above obligations into consideration, the policy document amplifies the obligations of the government towards IDPs to include: preventing all causes of displacement, raising awareness about the problems of displacement, collecting data regarding the number and conditions of IDPs, training on the rights of IDPs and creating a legal framework for

¹¹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 35-36

¹² National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 36-37

¹³ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp.37-38

¹⁴ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p.39

upholding these rights, implementing and reviewing the national policy, creating an institutional framework for coordinating all interventions, active participation of IDPs in decision making, durable solutions, strengthening cooperation with the international community, etc.

Humanitarian agencies who are important actors also have obligations. The first is that they must comply with the law and policy guidelines set in the international law and the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In providing protection and assistance to IDPs they must adhere to the core minimum standards in water, sanitation and hygiene protection, in food security, nutrition and food aid, in shelter, settlement and non-food items, and in health services, and the minimum standards common to all sectors bordering on participation, initial assessment, response, targeting, monitoring, evaluation, aid workers competencies and responsibilities, and supervision, management and support of personnel¹⁵.

As keep actors, the host communities have their rights as well as their obligations towards the IDPs. These rights are key responsibilities that the government and humanitarian agencies have towards host communities. And these rights include socio-economic rights involving conflict prevention and peace building efforts, adult literacy and health promotion initiatives and the expansion of the economic opportunities of host communities. The second is the right to security of life and property. The third is a right to adequate and appropriate compensation by relevant authorities for land used as a camp site. They also have a right to food security through means such as agricultural support to boost local food production and mitigate the impact of influx of IDP population on food security. The fifth is a right to safe environment, and the sixth, the right to quality health¹⁶.

Alongside their rights are their responsibilities towards the IDPs, which include the provision of adequate security and safety for IDPs, promotion of harmony and integration of IDPs, ensuring that the IDPs are not discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, etc., the provision of a safe space for the IDPs for the construction of a temporary shelter, ensuring access by humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations

¹⁵ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp.41-42

¹⁶ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 44

and government officials, allowing the IDPs to freely express themselves in terms of their culture, religion, political beliefs without undue discrimination, molestation or discrimination, not limiting the lawful movement of IDPs in and out of the community or prevent them access to any part of their community¹⁷.

Armed groups also have obligations towards Internally Displaced Persons. They are under obligation not to carry out arbitrary displacement, hamper the provision of protection and assistance to IDPs, deny IDPs access to food, water, security, health, shelter, separate members of the same family, restrict the free movement of IDPs, recruit children or permit them to take part in hostilities, forcibly recruit persons, kidnap, take hostage, or engage in sexual slavery or trafficking, especially as regards women and children, impede humanitarian assistance and passage of relief consignment, attack or harm humanitarian personnel or violate the civilian and humanitarian character of places where IDPs are sheltered.¹⁸

Policy Implementation Framework and Strategy

The first is a strategy for the prevention of internal displacement, which includes the protection of the rights of people from forced evictions. Accountability measures shall also be put in place to hold individuals, institutions and multi-nationals responsible for actions resulting in the displacement of vulnerable population; employment of measures that would prevent or mitigate conflict and ecological and environmental degradation. More so, promote good governance and thus reduce poverty so as to reduce vulnerability to displacement¹⁹.

In places where the situations have led to displacement of persons already, the policy looks forward to the protection and assistance of IDPs through provision of relief materials, deployment of the National Emergency Management Agency, institute mechanisms for coordinated management and administration of IDP camps, give special protection and assistance to women, children, the elderly and those with disability, activation of

¹⁷ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 44

¹⁸ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 45

¹⁹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp. 46-47

humanitarian agencies to intervene²⁰, etc. Efforts would be made towards the rehabilitation of the IDPs through providing post-traumatic disorder counseling services, reconstruction of damaged facilities and restoration of social amenities, restoring economic livelihood, rehabilitation of environment, provision of peace building and conflict resolution services and re-issuance of lost documents²¹. Efforts would also be made towards their return, or relocation or local integration of the internally displaced persons.

All these efforts would be directed at achieving durable solutions to the problems of internally displaced persons. And the success of this would be measured by the ability to provide long-term safety, freedom and security of movement, adequate standard of living, access to employment and livelihoods, access to effective mechanisms that restores what they have lost, including documents, unification with family members, access to justice, reparation and information. If these are achieved, then the solution provided can be considered a durable one. However, it is a gradual/long-term process, a complex process that addresses human rights²², which must avoid creating dependence of any sort.

As part of the providing an institutional mechanism for the coordination of response to IDPs so as to avoid coordination gaps, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall designate a focal coordinating institution to provide overall leadership and coordination on IDP issues. The focal coordinating commission shall advise the president and other agencies on IDP policy issue, promote donor commitment to IDP, organize and maintain relationship with relevant authorities (MDAs), ensure the integration of approaches for the assisting of IDPs, undertake a multi-agency situational analysis, ensure there is coordination among sectors and that a community-based approach is employed, ensure evaluation, monitoring and reviewing of activities, identifying and promoting best practices in camp management. They would also ensure compliance with clear guidelines, standard operating procedures and relevant codes of conduct and the creation of

²⁰ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 47

²¹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 47

²² National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 49

internal displacement coordination sectors and designating a leader for each sector. This is very crucial as the policy has adopted a sectoral approach to the management of IPDs in Nigeria. Each sector would have a lead agency and all sector leads would need to coordinate their efforts under the designated IDP Focal Coordinating Institution. The recommended sectors include: Food, Aid and Agriculture Sector, Camp Coordination, Management and Administration Sector, Human Rights and Protection Sector, Health and Nutrition Sector, education Sector, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector, Logistics and Communication Sector, Emergency, Shelter and Non-Food Item Sector, Rehabilitation, Return, Relocation and Reintegration Sector. The Sector Coordination Leads would have the responsibility of ensuring that there is a more coherent and effective response by mobilizing agencies, organizations or CSOs to respond strategically across all key sectors²³.

There would be a broad institutional framework and implementation agencies, which would be made of 26 institutions who would integrate the responsibilities for the protection and assistance of IDPs. There is also a provision for a framework for cooperation between the government and international agencies, donor partner, non-governmental organizations and human rights institutions committed to the assistance and protection of IDPs. For the success of this, the government and regional, international humanitarian and development actors will need to play their respective roles²⁴. This policy also has a legal framework predicted on the Nigerian human rights and humanitarian law obligations explicit in the Nigerian Constitution, statutes, regional, sub-regional and international treaties which Nigeria has either ratified or domesticated²⁵.

Funding, Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Review

Funding for the assistance to IDPs shall be raised through a number of mechanisms. First shall be the Joint Humanitarian Funding Mechanism (JHFM), which will be directly under the IDP Focal Coordinating Institution, and which shall over see the annual joint appeal process. The funds shall be

²³ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 52

²⁴ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp.56-58

²⁵ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 59

raised by all intervening agencies contributing a minimum of 5% of their resources for intervention. This would be paid into the joint humanitarian funding basket that shall be deployed by the IDP Focal Coordinating Institution when the need arises. However, the President shall provide the seed fund to begin critical operations. Other mechanisms for funding include the Flash Appeal Funding Mechanisms for rapid resource mobilization and response; the Grants and Loans Funding Mechanisms from the United Nations and African Union and the Individual Institutional and Agency Funding Mechanism²⁶.

As these are done, the policy document assures for a clear monitoring and evaluation framework. There will be a clear bench mark for assessing the level of implementation of this policy. The purpose of this monitoring shall be to ensure compliance with the policy guidelines, frameworks and scope. This will also be evaluated to know the level of the achievement of the goals and objectives of the policy²⁷. Very significant is the fact that the policy would be reviewed every five years with a view to making necessary improvements of the document. And more interesting is the style of the review: it shall be democratic, inclusive, consultative and discursive.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The emergence of this policy document at a time in the history of Nigeria when there is an increasing incidence of forced migration resulting from religious, ethnic, economic, boundary disputes, natural and man-made disasters, etc, is laudable. This is also a sign of the nation's commitment towards the welfare of her people who have become largely vulnerable and susceptible to all forms of exploitation, abuse and neglect across the nation; and a commitment towards the prevention, protection of IDPs, meeting their needs during displacement and ensuring their rehabilitation, return, reintegration and resettlement after displacement.

The policy framework on internally displaced persons in Nigeria is an aperture that would provide a coordinated rather than the usual fragmentary approach in the past to the plight of internally displaced persons. Also laudable is the fact that the policy adopts a human rights

²⁶ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, pp.60-61

²⁷ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p. 61

approach so as to accommodate as much as possible the provisions of existing international conventions, treaties and protocols on internal displacement. The democratic and consultative character of the document which puts into consideration the consultation of all stakeholders in the execution of the provisions of the policy, including the internally displaced persons, points to the concreteness of the policy document. Very outstanding is the documents method of definition of key terms to avoid ambiguities of perspectives or misunderstanding of the position of the document.

A major concern that runs through the fundamental Nigerian policy documents on migration is the absence or inadequacy of data²⁸. This policy document complained of the same problem: "While there is a large number of IDPs in Nigeria across various states arising from a multiplicity of causes, there is no reliable data base providing a comprehensive profile of IDPs in Nigeria"²⁹. In another part of the document it says: "Existing figures on the number of affected population are contradictory and pose a challenge for assessing the extent and impact of internally displacement on host communities and national security"³⁰. The absence of data raises serious questions as regards the sincerity of the policy document, for the simple reason that much cannot be achieved with adequate data as there is the need for the profiling of IDPs for planning and humanitarian assistance and protection intervention.

Bagoni Bukar observes that the Policy has no legal status and is therefore incapable of enforcement either by the government or the delegated actors. Currently there are monumental challenges relating to prevention of displacement, assistance, return and relocation of IDPs. The National Policy has come at a time when the country actually requires a strong legal and institutional framework rather than a mere policy. In addition, there is no body or organisation responsible for monitoring implementation by the National Commission for Refugees, which creates a wide space of different

²⁸ Labour Migration Policy for Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, 2010; National Draft Policy on Diaspora Matters. Federal Republic of Nigeria, November 2016; National Migration Policy, Federal Republic of Nigeria, May 13 2015.

²⁹ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p.9

³⁰ National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 2012, p.10

indices of unaccountability. More so, the National Commission for Refugees is under-funded, making it difficult, if not impossible to meet the needs of the increasing number of refugees across the country. Although the government has proposed the establishment of a Humanitarian Trust Fund to attract funding from individuals, corporate bodies, international agencies and others for activities in aid of IDPs, there is the problem of lack of accountability by those entrusted with public office and funds³¹.

Ezeanokwasa Kalu further observes that the policy is wired on the collaborative approach response model by which the response to the needs of the IDPs is done in a collegial manner, with the implication that the different needs of the IDPs are handed to different agencies, governmental and non-governmental, to cater for. There is no central institution at the helm of affairs with the direct and proper responsibility for the needs of the IDPs. Rather, the highest authority under this model is only a coordinator, a kind of *primus inter pares* amongst the other collaborating agencies³². The fact that these agencies are not all governmental institutions sets great limits to their responsibility and accountability. If amongst government agencies cooperation and collaboration is not usually free of crippling bureaucracies and inter-departmental discords, how much more when non-governmental institutions are involved³³. This will impact negatively on efficiency in responding to the needs of the IDPs. The 'abnegation of responsibility is possible because there is no formal responsibility apportioned to agencies under the Collaborative Response, and thus no accountability when agencies renege on their promises.'³⁴ Ugwu reiterated this when he wrote that: 'a lack of coordination among Nigerian agencies

³¹Bagoni Alhaji Bukar, Nigeria needs to take responsibility for its IDPs in FORGED MIGRATION REVIEW. <https://www.fmreview.org/young-and-out-of-place/bukar>, 2018.

³² Ezeanokwasa Kalu & Okaphor. A critique of the legal framework for arresting the threat of Internal displacement of persons to Nigeria's national security. NAUJILJ 9. 2. 2018, p.19

³³ Anne Davies and Magnus W. Murray, 'Implementation of the Collaborative Response in Liberia' in Marion Couldrey and Tim Morris (eds), *Forced Migration Review*, (Refugee Studies Centre 2005), 17

³⁴ Anne Davies and Magnus W. Murray, 'Implementation of the Collaborative Response in Liberia' in Marion Couldrey and Tim Morris (eds), *Forced Migration Review*, (Refugee Studies Centre 2005), 17

regarding IDPs has constrained efforts to reach these populations. One of the big issues has been who at the helm is in charge. The agencies have not had a particularly coherent approach towards the issue of this needy population.”³⁵

Ezeanokwasa Kalu observes that a gap in the policy is the absence of a dedicated source for funding the implementation of the policy. The policy is meant to be mainly implemented with funds raised from appeals to donor agencies and recourse to loans/grants from international organizations. The only direct financial commitments of the Presidency to the implementation of the policy is the provision of the seed funds into the Joint Humanitarian Funding Basket to jump-start critical operations and to fund life- saving programmes that are not yet funded. What a seed fund means is not defined by the policy. The fringe financial commitment of the Presidency to the implementation of the policy sends the signal that it is not the primary responsibility of the President to respond to the needs of the IDPs, but instead that of the collaborating agencies, and that the conditions of the IDPs is not on the priority list of the Federal Government. Without a dedicated source of funds on the part of the federal government, the policy cannot be said to have been designed to succeed³⁶.

Recommendations

1. The policy document on Internally Displaced Persons of August 2012 needs to be reviewed so as to ensure the filling in of major gaps.
2. The government of Nigeria needs to take far-reaching measures in committing itself to the protection and assistance of its citizens against arbitrary displacement, guaranteeing their rights during displacement and promoting durable solutions by facilitating voluntary return, resettlement, reintegration.
3. Beyond the policy document, the Nigerian government needs to develop additional programs and plans for addressing specific aspects of the needs of the IDPs.

³⁵ Ochiaka Ugwu, ‘Rising Nigeria IDPs: What solution?, *People’s Daily*, July 8, 2015

<http://www.peoplesdailyng.com/rising-nigeria-idps-what-solution/> accessed 30 April 2017

³⁶ Ezeanokwasa Kalu & Okaphor. A critique of the legal framework for arresting the threat of Internal displacement of persons to Nigeria’s national security. *NAUJILJ* 9. 2. 2018, p.19

4. The government needs to dedicate a specific amount of money in her budget for internally displaced persons and especially against cases of emergency.
5. The Federal government needs to ensure that the policy document has a legal status, for the purpose of its effectiveness.
6. The government needs to improve on the data of internally displaced persons, which is indispensable as she plans her interventions.
7. Since the document requires obligations from various quarters, it is necessary that the document be publicized as many Nigerians are not aware of its existence.

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