



AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN IDP CAMPS IN GUMA LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BENUE STATE

Igue Terungwa	Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Francis Onu, PhD	Department of Sociology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Bernard Hunvounopwa Basson	Institute of Governance and development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Vrati Sawuluma Nzonzo	Institute of Governance and development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

Gender based violence is a common social problem in the world, in Nigeria especially in the North Central parts of Nigeria which has witnessed large number of displacement in recent years, due to security challenges involving farmers and headers. There has been an increase in the cases of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, forced early marriage, and rape since the spate of large displacement in Benue State especially Guma Local Government Area. The cases of gender based violence in holding camps are very frequent. This is an empirical analysis of gender based violent in the camps in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. It is a descriptive survey using qualitative methods to obtain data on the prevalence of gender based violence as well as the causes and practices that predispose women in camps to violence. The findings revealed that there indeed exist gender based violence against women in the camps, that causes of gender based violence included but not limited to lack of economic opportunities for IDPs population resulting to commercial and exploitative sex being one of the few options for income generation to meet basic needs. The study then concludes that Camp management authorities should ensure equal access to food, health care for women. Developed mechanisms to ensure systematic monitoring of specific needs of the most vulnerable persons through provision for adequate security in the camps. Finally, some recommendations were made for camp authorities and the State Government notably the training of camp personnel on gender based issues and awareness creation.

Keywords: Gender, Violent, IDP, Local Government

1. Introduction

Globally today, we are witnessing an inexorable intensification of violence in the world's armed conflicts. And among that violence, the brutalization of women is a deplorable and persistent trend. Spotlighting the issue, Brock (2014) pointed to the fact that since the intensification of insurgency militant forces have captured and exploited women as assets. Married off under death threat, the abductees usually cook and clean for guerrilla units and are employed as baits for soldiers to be trapped and killed by the militants. They have used and punished women to demonstrate their power. While the entire displaced communities suffer the impact of armed conflict, women and girls are often the first to lose their rights

to education, social security and to livelihoods, among other rights being bluntly violated. Even after exiting the conflict zone, safety can be elusive. Staying in a IDP camp within the country of origin or seeking protection elsewhere brings serious threats to women's security, freedom and health. Women who evade being made captive by armed groups and human traffickers, nonetheless risk being enslaved in IDP Camps. Equally frightening in certain camps situations, unaccompanied women and girls have been known to enter what is called 'protection marriages' in order to avoid sexual assault.

Alarmingly, this abuse is not only perpetrated by male residents of the camp but can come at the hands of

security officials, Camp administration or humanitarian staff. Astoundingly, the reason for the deplorable situation of violence against displaced women that is still ongoing in camps is simply inadequate implementation of a range of existing policies that aim to protect and prevent women from assaults. As far back as 1979, UN Member States committed to taking steps to make the world safe and equitable for women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women stipulates that states should employ necessary steps toward eradicating the prostitution and trafficking of women. This norm should be applied to protect women in refugee and IDP camps from assaults.

The 2008 UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls restates the need for the implementation of codes of conduct that eliminate sexual assaults by humanitarian and authority personnel. It also suggests additional training for the staff on prevention and response to the assaults, but in practice too few recommendations are in effect. This study, therefore aims at carrying out an investigation on Gender Based Violence among IDPs in some selected IDP camps in Guma LGA of Benue State.

In Benue State precisely in 2018 on the 1st of January suspected herdsmen killed 81 persons in Guma as a result of the passing of the new anti-grazing law. Consequently, the Daudu area of Guma local government witnessed a surge in the number of IDPs. Daudu, became a natural stop for fleeing IDPs, first as a result of its location by the roadside and the number of slums it has, Displacement in this area constituted a serious challenge with reports of forced marriages and prostitution.

Thus, gender based violence in IDP camps is an acknowledged human rights abuse and is a violation of various international human rights instruments that place responsibility on host governments and other players to protect the human rights of female IDP. Changes in access to services, community support, resources, and security also diminish the capacity of female IDP to feel empowered. These makes female IDP more susceptible to gender based violence.

Report in Nigeria media describes the prevalence and characteristics of violence against Nigerian women; primarily gender based violence against female students, domestic workers, child and domestic violence with limited emphasis given to females in IDP camps. On the other hand, some existing study by various concerned bodies show that IDP in Nigeria face different problems including lack of adequate clean water, food, shelter, and freedom of movement. Yet, these researches mainly focused on general problems of IDP not specifically on gender based violence against female IDP.

Moreover, most academic research attempts observed mainly touching the issue of women's situation in IDP settings, with few emphasis on gender based violence against female IDP, but rather on the general conditions of women under IDP settings in general with no particular reference to camps. In line with this, the research approaches focused largely on assessing, examining and analysing gender based violence in IDP camps in Guma Local Government of Benue State. The objectives of the study are:

- i. To identify the types of gender-based violence among persons in internally displaced camps in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the perceived cause's gender-based violence among persons in internally displaced camps in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Gender- Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue affecting internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly women and girls. Human security, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, is severely compromised in situations of displacement (UNDP, 1994; Paris, 2001).

There is no one commonly agreed universal definition of gender-based violence; understandings differ according to country, community and legal context. Baker, (2007). Violence against women is a term often

used synonymous with gender-based violence. Nevertheless, the term does not make it clear whether or not the violence is derived from unequal power relationships between female and male in society. Heise, Lori, Mary, (1999). Hence, the adjective “gender-based” is repeatedly used to highlight the role that females’ subordinate status in society plays in increasing the risk that they will be impacted by violence. Thus, the intention of the term is in order to stress that violence against female is a phenomenon that is connected to the gender of both victim and perpetrator (Dennis & Vrethem, 1999).

Moreover, there is a tendency of extending this definition to all kinds of violence that are linked to social expectations and social positions based on gender. Accordingly, research in the area provides compelling evidence that violence against women is caused by gender inequalities and is both accepted and sometimes even tolerated by laws, institutions and community norms that discriminate the female. Ellsberg (1999) Thus, gender-based violence is a term that gradually encompasses all acts of violence rooted in some form of gender inequalities, and with the purpose of preserving social power.

The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (Hereinafter referred to as, DEVAW) Article 1 of the declaration defined gender-based violence as: *any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life*

Forms of Gender-Based Violence is based on different international human rights instruments, UNHCR developed five forms of gender-based violence; Sexual violence, Physical violence, Emotional and Psychological violence, Harmful traditional practices and Socio-economic violence.

Causes of Gender- Based Violence of Gender based violence spans all social classes and age groups. One of the fundamental causes is the power gap between male and female and the way females are underprivileged in main areas. In this regard, while gender-based violence may be aggravated by

particular social structures, value systems and traditions, it is rooted primarily in unequal power relations, (Gibbons, and Johnson 2003). Causes include; lack of social and economic power; financial insecurity; Poverty; discriminatory cultural norms and patriarchal ideology.

2.2 Empirical Review

Asgary, (2023) study titled "Prevalence, Patterns, and Determinants of Gender-Based Violence among Women and Girls in IDP Camps in Deynile District, Mogadishu" sheds light on the alarming rates of GBV in Somali IDP camps. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, the researchers gathered data from 300 women and girls aged 15-49 years through structured interviews. The analysis revealed that 18.5% of respondents experienced GBV within the past year, predominantly physical violence perpetrated by intimate partners or family members. The study's limitations include potential biases in self-reported data and a lack of longitudinal insights into changing patterns of violence over time. Nonetheless, this research is highly relevant as it provides empirical evidence on the prevalence of GBV in IDP settings, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance human security among vulnerable populations.

Sinha and Singh (2021) India research titled "Gender-Based Violence during Displacement: Insights from Internally Displaced Persons in India" investigates how displacement affects gender dynamics and increases vulnerability to violence among displaced populations within India’s conflict zones. The researchers conducted surveys with 400 participants across various IDP camps using structured questionnaires complemented by qualitative interviews for deeper insights into personal experiences with GBV during displacement periods. Their findings indicate a rise in domestic violence incidents linked directly to stressors associated with displacement such as loss of livelihood opportunities and social networks supporting victims' recovery post-violence incidents; however, critics have pointed out potential biases arising from self-reported data collection methods used throughout this study's design process impacting reliability overall conclusions drawn therein about prevalence rates observed across different demographic groups surveyed within these

camps respectively . This work is essential as it underscores how displacement exacerbates existing vulnerabilities while calling attention toward necessary interventions targeting both immediate safety concerns alongside long-term recovery efforts aimed at restoring stability amongst affected communities overall .These empirical reviews collectively underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence within various contexts particularly among internally displaced persons—highlighting critical areas where further research and intervention are necessary.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Human security theory

Human security is defined by the Commission on Human Security (CHC) as “. . . creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity” (Bayar & Aral, 2019,). The concept of human security that was first introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report highlights two core components. These are freedom from fear and freedom from want. Freedom from fear entails the protection of people from threats such as physical violence, armed conflicts, and war through various measures including the design of peace-building architecture. On the other hand, freedom from want requires liberation from non-violent threats to people’s welfare and dignities such as poverty, malnutrition, diseases, environmental degradation, and others (Woldetsadik, 2018). Human security theory underlines the concepts of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” The issue of freedom from fear is narrower than the issue of freedom from want. Freedom from fear seeks to understand human security as protecting individuals from violent conflicts while at the same time seeing these threats as strongly associated with poverty, lack of state capacity, and other forms of inequities. Freedom from want seeks to extend threats to include hunger, poverty, disease, and natural environmental disasters because they are inseparable concepts to address the root of insecurity and they also typically kill far more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined. This concept is broader as it transcends the issue of violence against

individuals to underline human social and economic development as the optimum way to protect individual security (Hanlon & Christie, 2016). Human security comprises seven dimensions such as economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (Oana, 2016). Economic security refers to an assured basic income. Food security is about people’s access to food and enough food to go around. Health security implies people’s access to health related services. Environmental security is about efforts to protect people from the long-term effects of human-made and natural disasters. Personal security describes security from physical and moral violence. Community security is about security or a sense of belonging to a particular group by being a member of that group. Political security refers to respect for the basic human rights of individuals (Hanlon & Christie, 2016).

3. Methodology

The study employed qualitative research method to provide a comprehensive analysis of Gender Based Violence in IDPs camp. The study relied on secondary data sources through review of existing literature, reports, and direct communication with officials and IDPs to contextualize and support data findings.

4. Results and Discussion

Gender-Based Violence in IDPs Camp in Guma LGA of Benue State

Following the large-scale displacement of civilians across Benue State especially in Guma Local Government were thousands of IDPs joined formal and informal camps in Daudu and Yelewata towns in 2018. Humanitarian agencies began programming in displacement affected areas and a formal camp called Abagana IDPs camp was established. Consequently there was widespread child protection risks, food shortage, prostitution and gender-based violence found across formal and informal displacement sites, and within the host communities.

Gender-based violence (GBV) has, over the last 8 years, emerged as a major concern within populations in conflict-affected settings in Benue State

with Guma Local Government Area having the highest number. GBV has caused severe implications for wellbeing, causing physical pain and disability, adverse mental health outcomes and increased risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. There is therefore the need for programming by Government and non-governmental agencies to address the needs of survivors – and to prevent perpetration of such violence. Quantification of the scope and magnitude of GBV is especially challenging in Abagana camp settings, with an even greater likelihood of fear and secrecy than in other settings leading to suppression of reporting. Nonetheless, an increasing number of persons have confirmed the high prevalence of GBV in the camp, thus, due to different reasons, female IDPs are the most vulnerable group in this community. The discriminations and challenges that female IDPs encounter here tend to emphasize public and political activities which are traditionally associated with men. Furthermore, despite the fact that female IDPs are the majority, often they have more difficulties than males to obtain their entitlements in the camp settings. Hence their, vulnerability increases.

The organisation of the IDP camps by gender has been an enduring challenge for protection, shelter and camp managers. In this segregated environment, the social fabric that normally protects women and girls has broken down, leaving them with unequal access to basic services or assistance and highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The lack of meaningful reporting channels and effective accountability mechanisms for corruption, as well as fear of possible retaliation, has resulted in limited reporting or protests against abuses.

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5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommended good practices for preventing and responding to GBV include awareness raising initiatives aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour around GBV, improving access to GBV response services (e.g. health services, psychosocial care, and legal) as well as improving the legal and security environment for IDPs. Recommended actions and good practices include:

- i. The IDPs Camps management authorities should adopt strategies for handling the prevalence cases of gender based violence and human security in the IDPs Camps. Like establishing safe spaces for women and girls to access services
- ii. The IDPs Camps management authorities should Provide GBV Services like medical, psycho-social, and legal support to victims of sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, harmful traditional practices and socio-economic violence in the Camps.
- iii. The IDPs Camps management authorities should implement Protection measures that address social structures, value systems and traditions as this is rooted primarily in unequal power relations in the Camps.
- iv. The IDPs Camps management authorities should encourage community engagement and participation, by involving the IDPs in planning and programming in camp settings.
- v. The IDPs Camps management authorities should train camp staff on the effective ways of handling gender based violence and human security issues in the Camps.

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