

Exploring Gender Intersectionality in Internal Displacement: A Case Study of Internally Displaced Women in Three Nigerian States

Working Paper No. 44

Tegan Mosugu, PhD, MSc, University of Toronto

Tufayl Olamilekan Adelakun, Lagos State University

Oluwatoyosi Amurawaiye, Federal University Lokoja

September 2024



Synopsis

Insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states, has profoundly impacted millions of individuals, with a disproportionate effect on girls and women. Among those requiring humanitarian aid in the BAY states, more than half (59% of the 8.4 million people) are female.¹ Women and girls make up most internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the BAY states, facing entrenched discriminatory social norms and gender inequities.

Existing literature has underscored the severe human rights violations experienced by IDPs, especially women, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptive solutions and structural support. However, our understanding of the gendered practices exacerbating the plight of internally displaced women (IDWs) remains limited. This study aims to explore how gender dynamics intersect with power structures, exacerbating the situation of IDWs in camps. It also emphasizes the necessity for interventions that recognize their intersectionalities and vulnerabilities. Using a qualitative scoping review methodology, this secondary research delves into gendered practices and the challenges faced by internally displaced women in Nigeria. Through examining these dynamics, the study seeks to provide insights for more targeted and effective interventions to address the multifaceted needs of IDWs in humanitarian settings.

Keywords

Nigeria, Internally Displaced Women (IDWs), Women/Girls, Conflict, Gender, Humanitarian Aid, Intersectionality, IDPs

Author Details

Email: teganjmosugu@gmail.com

¹ Amadhu, J., & Ahmed, U. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria: Borno, Adamawa, & Yobe (BAY) States. Reviewed and edited by S. P. Opolot, Senior GenCap Advisor, HC/HCT Nigeria. Abuja: UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA.

1. Introduction: History of Conflict in the Nigerian Regions of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe

Since the year 2009, the Northern part of Nigeria has been engulfed with the scourge of Boko Haram attacks leading to a severe humanitarian crisis and food insecurity within the region. This conflict has ravaged Borno State, which was formerly regarded as "The Home of Peace". Numerous non-state armed groups, including Boko Haram, have claimed tens of thousands of lives in attacks. In Borno State, more than 2 million people have been displaced from their homes.² In recent times, the population of Maiduguri, the capital, has doubled to three million. The health system is under extreme strain, and half of Borno State's schools have either been destroyed or forced to close. In densely populated camps and unofficial communities, there are still about 600,000.³ There are currently 450,000–1.2 million individuals projected to be outside the humanitarian reach.⁴ Conflict has also impacted Adamawa State, resulting in infrastructure devastation, fatalities, and relocation. Although it has somewhat less of an impact than Borno, it nonetheless faces comparable difficulties.⁵

The goal of the 2024 Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan is to provide for the basic requirements of the 4.4 million people impacted by the fighting in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe.⁶ With 1.7 million people in need of aid, Yobe State is the third most devastated state in the area.⁷ Over the past two years, the nature of fighting has changed, with fewer strikes on government and military targets.⁸ These areas have seen a number of conflicts throughout the years, from intertribal conflicts to the actions of insurgent groups like Boko Haram.⁹ The Boko Haram insurgency started in 2009 when the group launched violent attacks and turned into an armed conflict in 2014 when

² "Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Nigeria." Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. Accessed June 6, 2024.

³ Bilak, A. (2019). North-east Nigeria: A massive internal displacement crisis. *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)*.

⁴ Bilak, A. (2019). North-east Nigeria: A massive internal displacement crisis. *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)*.

⁵ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2024, March 25). Nigeria: Adamawa State 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.

⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Nigeria: 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan - Planning and Costing Methodology." March 25, 2024.

⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2023, December 8). Nigeria 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan. OCHA. Retrieved from <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1190/article/nigeria-1>

⁸ OCHA. (2024). Yobe State 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. ReliefWeb. [Nigeria: Yobe State 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/yobe-state-2024-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan)

⁹ OMITOLA, B., ADEDIRE, S., AKINRINDE, O. O., OMODUNBI, O., & SACKFLAME, M. M. (2021). THE TRIANGLE OF TERROR: BOKO HARAM, FULANI HERDSMEN, BANDITS AND ORGANISED INSECURITY IN NIGERIA. *Studia Securitatis*, 15(1).

they overran major towns in the northeast.¹⁰ The armed conflict in the BAY states has worsened the situation of children and women. The social environment remains highly volatile in these states, adversely impacting children and women.

Evidence shows an estimated 1.7 million children needed child protection services in 2021 (UNICEF, 2021). The protection crisis in north-east Nigeria required an unprecedented scaling up of humanitarian action. Children are amongst the most vulnerable in crises situations, exposed to life-threatening risks, extreme violence, abuse, physical/emotional and sexual exploitation, separation from their families, abduction, or military recruitment, early/forced marriages, social norms such as FGM, etc. Even where they are not directly targeted, women and children witness violence, experience terror, and deal with uncertainty and anxiety daily. The lasting effects can be both physical and emotional, impacting heavily on children's learning, behavior, emotional and social development. Humanitarian emergencies also deprive children of access to health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and other basic needs (CP, AoR 2020).¹¹ These events have resulted in widespread internal displacement, human casualties, and economic devastation, particularly for smallholder farmers.

2. The Plight of Women Affected by Conflicts in Northeast Nigeria

Women's lives in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe have been profoundly impacted by the hostilities in these areas, which have shaped their experiences and opportunities. Conflicts have resulted in massive displacement, fatalities, and interruption of livelihoods, ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency to inter-ethnic conflicts. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the humanitarian situation in the northeast of Nigeria, where 59% of the 8.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states are female. Among the 2.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 55% are female, with similar patterns observed among returnees (54% female), host communities (52% female), and inaccessible populations (52% female).¹² Multiple studies confirm that these gendered aspects of the conflict are deeply rooted in discriminatory social norms, gender inequality, and stereotypes, which contribute to the differential impact on women and girls. To understand the multi-complexity of the issues facing girls and women in the region, there is a need to conduct a needs assessment. As a result, the United Nations conducted an intersectional gender analysis (IGA) to understand the vulnerabilities, needs, capacities, and coping strategies of IDPs, refugees, returnees, and host communities (both women and men) in the conflict-affected states. The IGA is a useful tool that

¹⁰ Taft, P., Haken, N., Taft, P., & Haken, N. (2015). Northeast Overview. *Violence in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends*, 75-92.

¹¹ Kohrt, B. A., Mistry, A. S., Anand, N., Beecroft, B., & Nuwayhid, I. Health research in humanitarian crises: an urgent global imperative. *BMJ Global Health*. 2019; 4: e001870.

¹² UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Page 10. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

provides evidence to identify target populations, tailor responses, and allocate resources where most needed.¹³

3. Methods

A scoping review screened and selected sixteen articles through its predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria for inclusion and exclusion ensured the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Data from these articles were used to corroborate the findings of the UN Intersectional Gender Analysis, providing a deeper understanding of the systemic factors affecting women in internally displaced settings. This comprehensive approach would be useful in validating the primary data, but also offering a nuanced insight into the intersectional challenges faced by internally displaced women, enhancing the overall understanding of their plight and the development of adaptive solutions. Using the United Nations Intersectional Gender Analysis dataset, this study applied an intersectional theoretical approach to analyze the different narratives of IDPs in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states. The following intersections were explored: gender and income; gender and religion; gender and education; gender and culture.

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

Intersectionality as a theory is useful for examining internally displaced people. It enables stakeholders to understand how various social influences and factors can lead to women being more susceptible to vulnerabilities. Atewologun (2018) posits that intersectionality, as a critical theory, conceptualizes the crossing, juxtaposing, and meeting points of power, dominance, or oppression.¹⁴ Moreover, it serves as a useful paradigm for drawing attention to individuals' and groups' multiple positionalities at both the micro (individual) and macro (sociocultural) levels. Through intersectional theory, nuanced and complex group differences are examined, while still analyzing any assumptions of within-group homogeneity. Jones et al (2023) suggests that an intersectional approach is useful in examining structural level occurrences - particularly, those amplified by governance failures, underlining the need for sustained and coordinated support for IDPs beyond the initial emergency phase.¹⁵

Applying an intersectional lens to the experiences of women in the BAY states offers a unique perspective. This approach is particularly valuable as existing studies often separate these issues by state.¹⁶ This perspective across the three states will provide an in-depth level of understanding

¹³ Amadhu, J., & Ahmed, U. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria: Borno, Adamawa, & Yobe (BAY) States. Reviewed and edited by S. P. Opolot, Senior GenCap Advisor, HC/HCT Nigeria. Abuja: UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA.

¹⁴ Atewologun, D. (2018). Intersectionality theory and practice. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of business and management*.

¹⁵ Liu, R. T., Anglin, D. M., Dyar, C., & Alvarez, K. (2023). Intersectional approaches to risk, resilience, and mental health in marginalized populations: Introduction to the special section. *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science*, 132(5), 527–530.

¹⁶ Unaegbu, L. N., Kimiri, P., & Agada, S. (2020). Rapid Gender Analysis: North East Nigeria. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). UN Women Nigeria Country Office.

on how oppression is experienced, positions of influence attenuating the quality of life for women, and perceptions of social and economic power.¹⁷ An intersectional approach provides unique insights on how best social, economic, and cultural factors can either create or hinder an enabling environment for women in IDP camps. Thus, providing full context as to some of the challenges plaguing women and how best issues surrounding them can be addressed from a culturally appropriate perspective.

3.1.1 Intersectionality

Intersectional Factors	Determinants	Laws & Policies	Actors (State & Non-State)	Reform (Or Lack Thereof)
Gender x Income	Ability to participate in the formal economy is driven by access to capital. Long-term participation in the formal economy through sustainable businesses is driven by conducive tax conditions, and ease of doing business conditions.	Inflation rate affects the price stability. Interest rates affect access to capital. Consumer Price Index determines the consumer consumption pattern.	Actors such as NAFDAC, Standard Organization of Nigeria, National Bureau of Statistics plays significant roles in determining various economic policies that affect women in BAY states.	Need for institutional reform. Equitable taxation can generate resources for more positive social outcomes. Reform is needed to account for differential treatment of income as well as recognition of unpaid care work which many women may participate in Northeast Nigeria.
Gender x Culture	Ability to participate in political, socio-economic activities in their community is influenced by some discriminatory cultural norms that	Certain cultural norms such as bride abduction, wife inheritance, and restriction of women and girls to only housewife and child-bearing roles renders women at the	Traditional rulers such as Emir of Kano, Sultan of Sokoto, local government Chairman and Councilors are in positions to	Domesticating Child Rights Act across BAY states. Design and implement programs that would foster greater

¹⁷ Roth, Benita, 'Intersectionality: Origins, Travels, Questions, and Contributions', in Holly J. McCammon, and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism*, Oxford Handbooks (2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 10 May 2017),

Researching Internal Displacement – Working Paper

	relegate women's roles domestically.	receiving end of marginalization.	address cultural gaps.	sensitization around discriminatory cultural and gender norms.
Gender x Religion	In the BAY states, some religious traditions such as the belief in the superiority of males limits women's participation in specific political activities.	Religious norms that emphasize the “superiority” of the masculine gender over women are strong barriers to achieving the potentials of girls and women.	Religious leaders such as Imams and pastors are instrumental to addressing gender gaps. Religious bodies such as the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs and Christian Association of Nigeria play key roles in addressing gender gaps in BAY states.	Government should collaborate with religious leaders to develop innovative approaches and spaces for safe dialogue around sexual and reproductive health issues, specifically targeting women/girls.
Gender x Education	Some cultural and infrastructural barriers such as poverty, insecurity, child marriage, infrastructural deficit and limited resources affect girls and women's capacity to obtain high-quality education in the BAY states.	Education empowers girls and women with the right skills and opportunities to be actively involved in decision making processes at family and community level.	Family heads, Universal Basic Education board, school owners, government, civil societies are key actors that are involved in the education sector.	Girls should be empowered to access free and quality education. Government should provide more funding for education in emergency programs and ensure that girls who dropped out are supported to return to school.

4. Results

The findings reveal that the ability for women to participate in the formal economy has been impacted by various economic factors such as high rates of inflation, restricted access to finance, and limited economic freedom. An analysis of the United Nations Intersectional Gender Analysis

dataset carried out across three states – Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe – highlights that although internally displaced women can operate small businesses, they often lack access to capital to run sustainable businesses. For example, many women working in the food business face difficulties registering with the National Agency for Food and Drug Law Agency (NAFDAC). This is due to stringent conditions, including assembling company registration documents and obtaining a trademark and product label from the Standard Organization of Nigeria.¹⁸ The volatile nature of the conflict impacts the economy by disrupting local markets, affecting price stability, and altering consumption patterns, which affects women who have become breadwinners as a result of the Boko Haram conflict. Additional studies suggest that inflation rates in the BAY states are high because of the conflict, which has led to a spike in the cost of food commodities. Due to the Boko Haram crisis, the food inflation index jumped to 40.01 percent in March 2024 from 37.92 percent in February 2024, a difference of 2.09 percent. Generally, food prices have continued to rise across all monitored markets in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states.¹⁹ The inability to operate sustainable businesses can also lead to food insecurity on the household level. Across the three states, many settlements report insufficient food, leading to severe coping mechanisms such as foraging and consuming seed stock. Women also reported a lack of food amid the high inflation rates which are increasing stress levels and potentially affecting their mental well-being. Evidence even suggests that in any crisis setting, women and girls are usually more at risk of food insecurity than men since there are fewer work opportunities for women.²⁰

The United Nations Intersectional Gender Analysis dataset suggests that for many women and girls in the three states—especially in Yobe and Borno—movement outside the community is more restricted than it is for men and boys. This is attributed to the traditional domestic responsibilities carried out by women who have little time for other types of work. Compared to their male counterparts, women and girls are less mobile in times of conflict. Specifically, women in the BAY states lamented that the time they spend on domestic chores often limits their ability to participate in vocational skills acquisition programs organized outside their neighborhoods. Our findings point out that in many communities in Borno and Yobe, adolescent girls are expected to assist in domestic chores, while boys are to attend school, work on family farms, and fetch water and firewood.²¹ Married girls with children face additional burdens and have limited opportunities to

¹⁸ UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

¹⁹ National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). CPI and Inflation Report May 2024. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1241484>

²⁰ Unaegbu, L.N., Kimiri, P. & Agada, S. (2020). Rapid gender analysis: North East region, Nigeria. UN Women Nigeria, CARE Nigeria, & Oxfam in Nigeria https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Images/Publications/2020/NE%20Nigeria%20RGA%20digital_compressed.pdf

²¹ UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

develop their skills, mainly due to restricted mobility. On the other hand, girls and women traveling without a male companion find it financially and culturally challenging in conflict zones.²² As a result, the burden of care often falls on them – responsibility for children, taking care of the elderly, and other domestic responsibilities. Further studies reveal that when there is a male figure among them, girls and women in the community have limited mobility and must always get permission to go anywhere outside of the home from either their parents or husband.²³ Despite these restrictions, women and girls still face numerous challenges in the Bay states. These include high rates of kidnappings, forced labor, Armed Opposition Groups (AOG) attacks, farmer-herder disputes, and banditry, all of which pose serious threats to their safety. The findings indicate that communities across both Yobe and Adamawa continue to experience protection concerns. Reported safety threats ranged from AOG violence, the activities of bandits, herdsman-farmer conflicts, abductions and mines. Most respondents (90%) reported that incidents of looting, theft, and movement restrictions in Yobe and Adamawa settlements, caused by AOGs and or bandits, were especially targeted against women.²⁴

Primary data collected by the United Nations highlights that the three states – Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe – still harbor widespread, traditional, and discriminatory opinions regarding women's abilities, which have their roots in certain cultural and religious convictions. Women in Borno and Adamawa noted that the advancement of women's meaningful and active engagement in public leadership was being impeded by cultural norms that see women as inferior to males and urge men to hold leadership roles. From our findings, women are perceived as "weak" and unfit for public leadership and these conventions and beliefs have continued to keep many people from electing women to office.²⁵ Additionally, studies from a 2015 Voices4Change report suggests that “widely held ideas about masculinity and femininity are powerful ‘root causes’ of gender inequality and violence against women (in all its forms) in the BAY states.”²⁶ Like other regions in Nigeria, the BAY states have a low number of female political leaders – attributed to the lack of cultural and religious values placed on women in leadership roles. Although women make up half of the population in Nigeria (BAY states), they are viewed as less important than men in terms of politics, economy, society, and culture.²⁷ However, there is a critical need to address this gender gap.

²² Macklin, A. (2008). Legal Aspects of Conflict-Induced Migration by Women. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31), 22–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25475362>

²³ CARE and Plan Nigeria. (2022). Northeast Nigeria – Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States Rapid Gender Analysis. Retrieved from: https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/CARE_Plan-Nigeria-RGA-2022-Final.pdf

²⁴ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

²⁵ UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

²⁶ Voices4Change. (2015). Being a Man in Nigeria Report

²⁷ Abdulyakeen, A. (2022). The Politics of Gender Discrimination in Nigerian Fourth Republic: A Gender Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://wnus.usz.edu.pl/ap/file/article/download/19952.pdf>

Scholars suggest that active participation of women in politics helps facilitate women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability to women. Nigeria's growing population of internally displaced women requires the establishment of dependable legal and institutional frameworks to protect IDPs in Nigeria.²⁸ Protection for those compelled to leave their usual residences is supported by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.²⁹

The secondary analysis of field data reveals that across the BAY states, women and adolescent girls face multiple barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health and other health services as a consequence of the crisis impacting their communities.³⁰ Women and adolescent girls face multiple barriers such as the distance to facilities, inadequate service providers, limitation of the number of patients to be attended to in a day, and the unprofessional conduct of some health workers in the facilities. Women, particularly those in Borno and Yobe, continue to face an increased risk of miscarriage due to the relatively early age at which they are married.³¹ Early marriage and multiple early pregnancies are additional causes for concern, as they are likely to disproportionately impact the health outcomes of already vulnerable pregnant adolescents.³² Data obtained from the 2018 Nigeria DHS suggest that half of Nigerian women ages 25-49 were giving birth before the age of 21. Astonishingly, in Borno state, 10-17% of women ages 15-19 have begun childbearing in comparison to Adamawa and Yobe states, where this figure sits at 18-25%. Pregnant women and adolescent girls continue to face high risk of miscarriage in the BAY states, particularly because of the relatively early age at which they are having children.³³

According to the primary data collected from the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (The Kampala Convention), contracting states are to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to internally displaced girls and women including food, water, shelter, medical care, sanitation, education and other necessary social services. The Convention was designed to relate and respond to all phases of internal displacement; however,

²⁸ OMISORE, S. R., ABIFARIN, O., & AMANA, A. R. (2020). Nigeria's Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 24(3), 148–159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48590649>

²⁹ Barau, A. (2017). *Women and children fleeing Boko Haram: their experiences in Nigerian cities*. International Institute for Environment and Development. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17985>

³⁰ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

³¹ UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

³² WHO. (2021). Adolescent and young adult health <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-healthrisks-and-solutions>

³³ Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018 - Summary Report. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR264/SR264.pdf>

Nigeria has not yet domesticated the Kampala Convention.³⁴ The Convention articulates obligations of the states to prevent the conditions contributing to displacement, protection and assistance during displacement, and offers durable solutions to end displacement. It also addresses the role of the African Union, international organizations, humanitarian agencies and armed groups in preventing and responding to internal displacement.³⁵ Studies reveal that the Nigerian government's efforts fall short of the Kampala Convention's stipulations. The Convention calls on African governments to address the specific needs of different groups of women to ameliorate their plight. Specifically, they are not adequately addressing the unique needs of internally displaced women and are instead treating them as a homogenous group. As a result, the unique and legitimate requirements of internally displaced women are not sufficiently met, making it difficult to support and safeguard these women.³⁶

Child marriage and sexual assault have increased due to the insurgency, according to primary data gathered from the United Nations in BAY states. For instance, according to some women, they were forced to decide whether to arrange the marriage of their daughters "for free"—that is, without paying a dowry—to "protect their honor" against the rising likelihood of rape, sex slavery, GBV, and abduction.³⁷ We observed that prolonged closure of schools along with financial difficulties has also put girls at risk of child marriage. Girls who are not in school are forced into earlier marriage.³⁸ Furthermore, studies indicate that in 2021, 98% of reported incidents of GBV across the BAY states were perpetrated against women, 81% of the incidents were perpetrated against adults, and 19% against adolescents under 18 years. The reported GBV incidents included physical assault (26%), denial of resources, opportunities and services (27%), rape (18%), psychological and emotional abuse (16%), forced marriage (9%) and sexual assault (4%).³⁹ Findings also show that many women are experiencing GBV out of men's frustrations at being unable to meet material needs of their families. According to women in the states of Borno and Yobe, many men perceive the humanitarian aid provided to women—which is intended to protect women from abuse by men and to ensure that children do not go hungry—as an attempt to diminish their authority as heads of homes and emasculate them. As a result of this, some men have resorted

³⁴ OMISORE, S. R., ABIFARIN, O., & AMANA, A. R. (2020). Nigeria's Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 24(3), 148–159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48590649>

³⁵ Andrew Solomon. (2010). African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, Introductory Note by Andrew Solomon. *International Legal Materials*, 49(1), 83–100. <https://doi.org/10.5305/intelegamate.49.1.0083>

³⁶ Agbonifo, J. U. (2020). The plight of IDP women: A gender and intersectional analysis of the experiences of internally displaced women in IDP camps Borno Nigeria. <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/56137/RP-Joy-Uzoamaka-Agbonifo.pdf>

³⁷ CARE. Rapid Gender and GBV Assessment in MMC and Jere Local Governments – Borno State. <https://careevaluations.org/evaluation/rapid-gender-and-gbv-assessment-in-mmcc-and-jere-local-governments-borno-state/>

³⁸ CARE, Oxfam, UN Women. (2020). Rapid Gender Analysis, North East Region, Nigeria (July 2020). <https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/NE-Nigeria-RGA-final-2020.pdf>

³⁹ Protection Sector, Northeast Nigeria 2021 annual report. Government of Nigeria, UNHCR, <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/protection-sector-northeast-nigeria-annual-report-2021>

to violence to reassert control over their wives.⁴⁰ While armed conflict and displacement can lead to a variety of human rights violations by hostile parties, it is crucial to recognize that women who are displaced by conflict are also more vulnerable to social exclusion from their own families and communities, coerced sex, harmful cultural practices, unequal access to resources, and domestic violence.⁴¹

Lastly, the United Nations data in the BAY states highlights that women who have escaped or have been rescued by Nigerian soldiers, report exposure to, and or forced participation in, extreme violence in the BAY states. In addition to sexual and physical abuse, Boko Haram perpetrated psychological abuse of their captives to maximize the utility of women and girls to the group's mission.⁴² Despite international legal frameworks emphasizing the protection and empowerment of women, enforcement remains problematic in Nigeria. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 highlights the importance of integrating women into peace processes.⁴³ Evidence also reveals that the displacement of women in the BAY states has increased the potential for sexual exploitation and abuse because of the high demand for services in a context of limited resources. The camps are densely populated and IDPs are not able to go out to look for work and as such resort to exchanging sex for resources. Disruptions or delays in food distribution also make women and girls more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Community leaders have noted that the exploitation has been happening more between IDPs, with early evidence suggesting increases in survival sex.⁴⁴

4.1 Limitations

The United Nations dataset does not adequately examine perceptions of security, which it should. Key informant interviews across Adamawa and Yobe States reveal that internally displaced persons in hard-to-reach areas sometimes perceive a lower risk of abduction and insecurity. Understanding the factors contributing to this perception, especially for women above the age of 18, is crucial. The interviews indicated that most view violence from pressure groups as their biggest threat, with fewer considering abduction as a significant risk.

⁴⁰ UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from: https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

⁴¹ Macklin, A. (2008). Legal Aspects of Conflict-Induced Migration by Women. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31), 22–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25475362>

⁴² BLOOM, M., & MATFESS, H. (2016). Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror. *PRISM*, 6(1), 104–121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470435>

⁴³ Hendrix, S. E. (2016). Combating Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Nigeria: Defining a New Approach to Winning Modern Jihadist Conflict. *The International Lawyer*, 49(3), 427–450. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26415586>

⁴⁴ Andrew Solomon. (2010). African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, Introductory Note by Andrew Solomon. *International Legal Materials*, 49(1), 83–100. <https://doi.org/10.5305/intelegamate.49.1.0083>

One of the limitations of the United Nations Intersectional Gender Analysis dataset is that it does not examine the various drivers behind women being recruited into terrorist or insurgency activities. While other data suggest that early marriage can sometimes lead to women's involvement in terrorist groups, and that early adoption or captivity can also play a role, this dataset lacks detailed examination of these factors. Additionally, some evidence indicates that women may willingly participate in these groups for financial support. Therefore, it is crucial for the analysis to investigate the intrapersonal and community leadership dynamics among women that contribute to their recruitment. This would help communities understand the various tactics used by these groups and dispel myths and misinformation.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Complex Nature of Insecurity Facing Women in IDP Camps

Delivering goods and services to internally displaced people requires an equitable approach, ensuring that allocated resources are distributed fairly and inclusively, with particular attention to the most vulnerable, namely women and girls. In Nigeria, consistent decreases in funding since 2017 for internally displaced people has not only exposed women and girls to social risks but has made it difficult for them to access necessities.^{45 46 47} Furthermore, reduced funding exacerbates insecurity for girls and women, especially in terms of their ability to exercise free will, facing risks such as abduction, forced marriage, or harm while performing everyday tasks. Women, who are more likely to become internally displaced people rather than refugees, often face limitations in relocation due to geopolitical constraints, which restrict their economic opportunities and mobility. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize the rights of IDP women, ensuring protection not only by international laws but also within national borders, encompassing dignity, safety, protection from gender-based violence, access to medical care, and education and training opportunities, including addressing sexual and reproductive health needs.

Although women and girls face grave insecurity, they may not often be able to gauge their level of risk. For girls under 18, the risk of sexual violence and early marriage is often seen as being far greater than the threat of armed opposition violence. This perception of risk affects their ability to carry out normal activities in IDP locations and interact within their communities.⁴⁸ Further study is needed on the socio-cultural factors influencing early marriage practices, particularly the reasons

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2017). World Report 2017: Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/nigeria>

⁴⁶ UNHCR. (2020, April 16). Support for internally displaced people needs to be 'urgently stepped up'. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2020/4/5e9803fb4/support-internally-displaced-people-needs-urgently-stepped.html>

⁴⁷ United Nations in Nigeria. (2022, April 24). Empowering displaced women, girls, and persons with disabilities in North-East Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://nigeria.un.org/en/122173-empowering-displaced-women-girls-and-persons-disabilities-north-east-nigeria>

⁴⁸ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

why parents give their daughters up for early marriage. The development discourse has promoted and suggested that girls staying in schools offers several benefits. Girls are encouraged to not only gain literacy but also to develop skills necessary for participation in the formal economy, securing long-term jobs, and becoming entrepreneurs. However, many families face the difficult decision of either remaining in poverty or opting for early marriage to provide a seemingly better future for their daughters. Therefore, there must be a societal conversation about the shifts needed to support girls' development and education, and the awareness that needs to occur at the household level – especially in conflict areas. Amid the prevalence of early marriages, it is imperative to ensure that girls are informed about and have access to the necessary resources to support their health and well-being. For young girls that marry early, it is also crucial to understand the challenges associated with early marriage and to raise awareness among girls about prioritizing their sexual and reproductive health needs. Without this awareness, they may face significant health challenges, including inadequate physical care.

5.2 Global Health Security

Global health insecurity significantly affects the lives and well-being of women in IDP communities, particularly those in hard-to-reach settlements. Access to essential resources, goods, and services is limited, compounded by inadequate health infrastructure, hindering women from attaining a good quality of life. Damaged healthcare facilities further restrict women's access to healthcare, with shortages of medications often discouraging continuous care-seeking. Girls and women in these areas are also highly vulnerable to communicable diseases due to poor sanitation practices and lack of access to water and soap.⁴⁹ For instance, a population health survey revealed that only 14% of women in internally displaced settlements use water and soap to wash their hands, while the majority, 70%, rely solely on water, heightening the risk of communicable diseases.⁵⁰ Therefore, gender considerations must be integrated intentionally into water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) targets when planning interventions. Moreover, IDP women often reside in makeshift shelters, which increases their vulnerability to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive approaches that strengthen healthcare systems, ensure medication availability, improve sanitation facilities, and address gender-based violence. By prioritizing women's health and safety in IDP settings, it is possible to work towards building more resilient and inclusive communities.

5.3 Reforming Displacement Crisis Management

There is a critical need for ongoing discourse regarding Nigeria's national humanitarian agencies and the reform of displacement crisis management. This includes improving the protection of displaced individuals' and children's rights by institutions and NGOs and ensuring pathways to settlement, even in urban areas. Cultural norms in some parts of Nigeria suggest that internally

⁴⁹ IOM Nigeria (2021). 'COVID-19 Situational Analysis 5: North East Nigeria' (April 2021) Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID-19%20Situation%20Report%205%20-%20North%20East%20Nigeria_.pdf

⁵⁰ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

displaced people may prefer receiving raw materials over cooked food, as this allows them greater autonomy and control over their consumption.⁵¹ Additionally, systematizing the distribution of monetary assistance and other forms of direct aid to IDPs is crucial.⁵² Despite the outflow of aid, women within their communities continue to face significant challenges, and often need to borrow food.⁵³ For example, data reveals that 78% of women in Adamawa are likely to borrow food or money from a friend or relative, compared to only 24% in Yobe.⁵⁴ Conversely, 83% of women in Yobe gather food for themselves, compared to 67% in Adamawa. In Adamawa, 47% of women rely on relatives for food, whereas in Yobe, this figure drops to 3%.⁵⁵ These statistics highlight that the aid provided to women often does not alleviate their plight effectively. Further, it is essential to address the structural issues contributing to these disparities. This involves not only increasing the quantity of aid but also improving its quality and relevance to the recipients' needs. Comprehensive policy reforms should focus on enhancing the capacity of national humanitarian agencies, fostering stronger partnerships with NGOs, and leveraging community-based approaches to aid distribution. Moreover, integrating gender-sensitive strategies into humanitarian responses can ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are met. This includes providing targeted support for women's economic empowerment and addressing the socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to resources. By adopting a more inclusive and systematic approach, Nigeria can create more sustainable and effective solutions for managing displacement crises and supporting the rights and welfare of IDPs.

5.4 Restructuring the Legislature

Currently, the Nigerian executive and parliamentary bodies have not fully incorporated IDP rights into domestic law. This has led many states to rely on international laws that may not be fully implemented or incorporated. The Kampala Convention stipulates that states should provide adequate humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter, medical care, sanitation, education, and other necessary social services. However, Nigeria has yet to take swift action to ensure that conflict-stricken states recognize and provide a pathway to resettlement for IDPs. States must take a more active role in incorporating IDP rights into their laws and policies. By doing so, they can ensure that IDPs, especially young girls and women, receive the goods and

⁵¹ Barau, A. (2017). *Women and children fleeing Boko Haram: their experiences in Nigerian cities*. International Institute for Environment and Development. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17985>

⁵² Barau, A. (2017). *Women and children fleeing Boko Haram: their experiences in Nigerian cities*. International Institute for Environment and Development. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17985>

⁵³ Unaegbu, L.N., Kimiri, P. & Agada, S. (2020). Rapid gender analysis: North East region, Nigeria. UN Women Nigeria, CARE Nigeria, & Oxfam in Nigeria https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Images/Publications/2020/NE%20Nigeria%20RGA%20digital_compressed.pdf

⁵⁴ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

⁵⁵ Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

services they need, and the social protections recognized by international law. The national government needs to unite states, particularly those affected by conflict, and demonstrate a planned pathway for organizing IDPs. This approach would recognize IDPs not only as people deserving full rights but also as integral to rebuilding communities and households.

6. Conclusion

The insecurity gripping the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe has triggered severe humanitarian crises, marked by widespread displacement, loss of life, and infrastructure destruction, profoundly impacting the social and economic fabric of local communities. This impact has disproportionately affected girls and women, who face heightened risks of violence, restricted mobility, and limited access to critical services like education and healthcare. This intersectional analysis highlights how these norms, alongside economic and educational barriers, compound their challenges. These challenges, when juxtaposed with cultural and religious expectations, determine the extent to which women participate in their collective socio-economic and political spheres. Consequently, there is an urgent need to integrate gender perspectives into targeted assistance efforts to maximize impact and ameliorate the quality of life for women and girls. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts, including policy reforms, improved access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare. Additionally, community sensitization efforts are crucial to challenging and transforming discriminatory norms and practices, ensuring the empowerment and well-being of internally displaced women and girls.

Bibliography

Abdulyakeen, A. (2022). The Politics of Gender Discrimination in Nigerian Fourth Republic: A Gender Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://wnus.usz.edu.pl/ap/file/article/download/19952.pdf>

Agbonifo, J. U. (2020). The plight of IDP women: A gender and intersectional analysis of the experiences of internally displaced women in IDP camps Borno Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/56137/RP-Joy-Uzoamaka-Agbonifo.pdf>

Barau, A. (2017). *Women and children fleeing Boko Haram: their experiences in Nigerian cities*. International Institute for Environment and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17985>

Bloom, M., & MATFESS, H. (2016). Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror. *PRISM*, 6(1), 104–121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26470435>

CARE, Oxfam, UN Women. (2020). Rapid Gender Analysis, North East Region, Nigeria (July 2020). Retrieved from <https://www.careevaluations.org/wpcontent/uploads/NE-Nigeria-RGA-final-2020.pdf>.

CARE and Plan Nigeria. (2022). Northeast Nigeria – Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States Rapid Gender Analysis. Retrieved from https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/CARE_Plan-Nigeria-RGA-2022-Final.pdf

Hendrix, S. E. (2016). Combating Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Nigeria: Defining a New Approach to Winning Modern Jihadist Conflict. *The International Lawyer*, 49(3), 427–450. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26415586>

Macklin, A. (2008). Legal Aspects of Conflict-Induced Migration by Women. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31), 22–32. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25475362>

National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). CPI and Inflation Report May 2024. Retrieved from <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1241484>

Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018 - Summary Report. Retrieved from <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR264/SR264.pdf>

Omisore, S. R., Abifarin, O., & Amana, A. R. (2020). Nigeria's Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 24(3), 148–159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48590649>

Reach Initiative. (2022). Humanitarian Situation Overview in Hard-to-Reach Areas: Adamawa and Yobe States | Nigeria Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/humanitarian-situation-overview-hard-reach-areas-adamawa-and-yobe-states-nigeria>

Researching Internal Displacement – Working Paper

Reliefweb. (2022). Protection Sector Strategy - North-East Nigeria 2022-2023

Retrieved from

<https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/protection-sector-strategy-north-east-nigeria-2022-2023>

Unaegbu, L.N., Kimiri, P. & Agada, S. (2020). Rapid gender analysis: North East region, Nigeria.

UN Women Nigeria, CARE Nigeria, & Oxfam in Nigeria. Retrieved from

https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Images/Publications/2020/NE%20Nigeria%20RGA%20digital_compressed.pdf

UN Women, OCHA & UNFPA. (2023). Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States. Retrieved from

https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/intersectional_gender_analysis_north_east_nigeria_final_report_04.05.2023.pdf

Voices4Change (2015). Being a Man in Nigeria: Perceptions and Realities. Retrieved from

<https://c4d.org/being-a-man-in-nigeria-perceptions-and-realities-voices-4-change-nigeria-2015>

World Health Organization (2021). Adolescent and young adult health. Retrieved from

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-healthrisks-and-solutions> .