

GOVERNMENT RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF DISPLACED BAKASSI INDIGENES

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Abstract

Following the International Court of Justice judgment on Bakassi Peninsula, Nigeria withdrew its military and citizens from the disputed enclave. While avoiding interstate conflict, the existential imperatives of the displaced Bakassi indigenes were not adequately accommodated. The study aims to review the government resettlement programme in the post International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment, and its effect on the socio-economic sustainability of the displaced Bakassi people. The research adopted the diffusion theory of resettlement and the Chambers Participatory Development Model (CPDM) to explain the contesting issues regarding IDPs and complexity of resettlement. The qualitative research method involving semi-structured interview employed, and thematic inductive analysis was used to generate primary evidences. Also, the content analysis approach was used in the analysis of secondary data. Findings suggest that the government resettlement programme did align with extant local and international principles governing the resettlement of IDPs. And that the government resettlement programme was ineffective in addressing the socioeconomic sustainability question of the people. Also, that there is no evidence to suggest that the displaced Bakassi indigenes fully participated in their plight of adequate resettlement. The study argues that, resulting from poor implementation process, the people continue to suffer several years of displacement from their ancestral homes. Therefore, the study recommends a reworking of the resettlement programme to ensure that the human security, equity and social justice form the bedrock of the resettlement.

Keywords: Bakassi indigenes, Displacement, Resettlement, Socioeconomic, Sustainability

1.1 Introduction

Bakassi Peninsula is considered one of the richest peninsulas in Africa as it contains extensive reserves of oil and gas, and rich aquatic resources (Mbuh, 2004). The dispute regarding sovereign ownership of Bakassi never existed until oil was

discovered in the waters surrounding the peninsula, which resulted in intermittent clashes between the armed forces of both sides (Undiyaundeye, 2011). The International Court of Justice's (ICJ) judgment endorsed the ceding of Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon. The strength of the ICJ judgment was its instrumentality in

guaranteeing security and diplomatic relations with Cameroon, however, its major shortcoming is its weak human security implications for the indigenous people of Bakassi (Mbuh, 2004). The judgment undermined the wellbeing of the people of Bakassi, whose ancestral home was handed over to accommodate what can be described as the conflicting interest of external forces, alien to traditional kingdom of Bakassi. Moreover, the distress suffered by the Bakassi people regarding the loss of their ancestral land is compounded by the permanent disconnect from their source of livelihood. It caused loss of access to critical aquatic resources which ab-intio provided the basis of livelihood for indigenous people of Bakassi (Emewu and Omipidan, 2004; Okoi, 2016).

The Bakassi enclave contains deposits of more than ten billion barrels of crude oil and several trillion cubic feet of natural gas beds. Aside oil, the region is also a veritable ground for fish farming and other water based businesses (Yerima & Singh, 2017). The Peninsula is “located at the extreme Eastern end of the Gulf of Guinea, precisely between the Cross River estuary near the city of Calabar (about 4 km) and the Rio del Rey estuaries in the East, which is a drainage basin located in West Africa within Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon covering an estimated area of some 1000km² of mangrove swamps, creeks and half-submerged islands. And the peninsula is estimated to be 1,600km long, between the border of Nigeria to the West and Cameroon to the East, and extend from Lake Chad to the Gulf of Guinea. It had a rough population index that ranges from 150,000 to 300,000 of which 90% of the people were Nigerians, of the Ibibio, Efik, Ekoi, Semi-Bantu, and the Bantu tribe, and mostly fishermen and their families (Economist, 2008; Yerima & Singh, 2017).

To facilitate the resettlement of the Bakassi returnees, the Cross River State government created additional local government called the Bakassi LGA, with its administrative headquarters at Ikang (Tripod, 2020). Between 2009 and 2010, about 4000 Bakassi returnees were evacuated to Bakassi LGA at Ikang, under the supervision of government at all levels, including the United Nations Commission for Refugees (UNCR) (Bassey, 2015). Regardless of government initial efforts, government inconsistencies resulting from political interest, poor political will and corruption, the displaced Bakassi indigenes remained subject to economic hardship and a deplorable state of existence. Isokon (2016) associates the condition of Bakassi settlers with impoverishment, loss of livelihoods, discrimination, stigmatization and infringement of fundamental rights. Therefore, this research study is set out to determine the effect of government resettlement programme on the socioeconomic sustainability of displaced Bakassi indigenes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since losing Bakassi Peninsula, the Bakassi indigenes have continued to bear the brunt of the poor implementation of the Green Tree Agreement (Christopher, 2013). Displaced communities remains deprived due to poor implementation of the policy framework of the resettlement programme. Years after, many of them are still living as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in different locations, with marginal attention from the federal government. Those in the internally displaced camps are deprived of shelter, clothing, food supply and other humanitarian aids. The promises of infrastructural development, such as schools, health care, and security etc, or even modest monthly stipends continued to elude the people (Effiong, 2015). The displaced indigenes of Bakassi suffers neglect in the midst of adaptability crisis,

governments effort is yet to yield significant change in the lives of the displaced people of Bakassi. It is in the light of this protracted Bakassi situation that this study aims to revisit the displacement crisis and resettlement programme.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions are as follows;

1. What are the formal guidelines governing the relocation and management of internally displaced people in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of the resettlement programme on the socio-economic sustainability of displaced Bakassi indigenes?
3. What useful recommendations can be proffered to address the challenge of socioeconomic sustainability of the displaced Bakassi indigenes?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are stated as follows to;

1. Identify the guidelines governing the relocation and management of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria?
2. Investigate the effect of government resettlement programme on the socio-economic sustainability of displaced Bakassi Indigenes?
3. Proffer useful recommendations to the challenge of socioeconomic sustainability of displaced Bakassi indigenes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the diffusion theory of resettlement and Chambers' Participatory Development Model (CPDM). The reason for adopting the two distinction theories is based on the

complimentary insight they provide in attempt to understand the complexity of resettlement.

2.1.1 Diffusion Theory of Resettlement

The diffusion theory of resettlement is theoretically rooted in the spatial diffusion tradition mostly associated with Torsten Hagerstrand (1952, 1967). Hagerstrand's work conceptualized diffusion as a spatial-temporary process through which phenomenon spread from one location to another, and are conditioned by geographical distance, environmental characteristics, social interaction and accessibility. Applied to population resettlement, this perspective provides a basis for understanding the movement of displaced populations from an original settlement to a new location, how the displaced populations adjust to new spatial environments, how the characteristics of receiving settlements influence their socioeconomic adaption.. Diffusion theory highlights four stages in which resettlement manifest: The first stage refers to the physical transfers of affected persons (APs) to a new site; the second is the adoption process to the biophysical and human environments. The third is the achievement of socio-economic development by the APs; and the fourth is the ability of APs to manage the biophysical and human environment (Woube, 2005).

This perspective is particularly pertinent to the Bakassi experience because displacement involved a profound spatial and socioeconomic rupture. The transfer of sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula following the 2006 Green Tree Agreement created the circumstances for the relocation of Nigerian communities. Subsequent evidence indicates that the challenges confronting the displaced population extended beyond physical relocation to practical economic needs and participation in governance. Ngali (2019), for example, found that economic needs and functional participation in governance were central concerns among relocated Bakassi people, while government shortcomings continued to undermine proper resettlement. The

explanatory value of diffusion theory for this study therefore lies in its ability to establish that the location and conditions of a new settlement matter for socioeconomic sustainability. Thus, the theory provides a basis for assessing whether the new socioeconomic environment of the displaced Bakassi Indigenes enabled them to reconstruct livelihoods and attain conditions comparable to, or better than, those existing before displacement. The Diffusion Theory has a limitation when used alone. Its emphasis on movement, spatial adjustment and environmental adaptation does not sufficiently explain the quality of government intervention, the role of displaced persons in decision-making, or the extent to which resettlement programmes reflect the needs and preferences of beneficiaries.

2.1.2 Chambers Participatory Development Model (CPDM)

Chambers' participatory development model is rooted in the broader participatory development tradition associated with Robert Chambers (1983). The approach challenges conventional top-down development practices in which government officials, development agencies and technical experts determine priorities for disadvantaged populations, and intervening in the plight of communities to carry out development projects, with limited involvement of the intended beneficiaries. Instead, participatory development emphasizes the knowledge, experiences, priorities, agency and active involvement of local people in identifying problems, determining priorities, designing interventions and evaluating development outcomes. CPDM focused on small scale development that allows the poor to be adequately involved and participate effectively in development process of their communities, in synergy with external agents acting as facilitators and financier. Thus, the model stresses citizen participation in decision making as a panacea for effective community development programme. The model incorporates the imperative for capacity building, political, economic and

socio-cultural wellbeing. Thus the thrust of the model include the advocacy for adopting strategies to empower the most disadvantage group (Chambers, 1983).

This principle is particularly important in resettlement because displaced persons possess contextual knowledge concerning their livelihoods, social relations, cultural practices, security needs and environmental requirements. Applied to the Bakassi case, Chambers' model suggests that the sustainability of resettlement depends partly on the extent to which displaced Bakassi Indigenes were involved in decisions concerning the planning, location, design, implementation and management of their resettlement.

2.2 Conceptual Discourse

2.2.1 Perspectives on Internally Displacement Persons (IDPs)

Internal displacement is described as a situation where members of a community who by virtue of natural or man-made factors such as poverty, joblessness, hunger, epidemics and human rights abuses, are forced to exit their places of permanent residence. On the other hand, the term Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is applicable to affected persons (APs) of such natural or man-made occurrence, causing them to seek refuge elsewhere (Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, 2006). Ladan (2012) presents a narrow view of internal displacement as a situation arising strictly from armed conflict. In Jamie In his work: 'Justices and Internal Displacement', published in 2021, Jamie Draper attempt to explain the subject-matter of justice and jurisdiction regarding responsibility to IDPs protection and governance. In terms of the status of relationship with the state, Draper argued the difference between IDP status and Refugees in relations to responsibility to protect by the state and international bodies, by importing what he

termed the 'relational view' and the 'involuntariness perspective.

On the relational view, he argues that IDPs relationship with their state can remain essentially intact, regardless of their displacement situation, and demand state protection. While on the other hand, the refugee are not entitled to similar demand as they have exceeded state jurisdictional coverage, which is considered a breakdown of relationship. The IDP status under the relational view can create a vacuum for the possibility of what is considered an 'internal refugees', which is still differentiated from what absolutely constitutes refugee statutes (Draper, 2021). The relational view regarding IDPs is anchored on the position that the current era of international legal order is state-centric, with each state having its clearly defined sphere of juridical coverage. That is, states are only responsible for the IDPs as they are affected within the juridical purview of the state. Another is the international law of recognition that; it is the primary duty of states to protect and safeguard the rights, liberty and wellbeing of its people on the basis of law (Karp, 2020). In this regard, states protective responsibility on their citizens suffices even outside their territorial jurisdiction, and can lose their right of primary guarantor of the human right, when they fail in their protective duties. When such right as the 'first-level' guarantor is lost, the right of 'second-level' duty automatically falls on the collective responsibility of external multilateral intervention (Beitz, 2009).

In relation to the displaced Bakassi indigenes, the relational jurisdiction resides with the state whose duty it is to protect and provide for its citizenry whose displacement resulted from the international Court of Justices (ICJ) judgment. Though the Bakassi displacement situation emanated from the ICJ judgment, and the consequent

hostilities from the Cameroon gendarme, which created a sudden awkward situation that left the people displaced, it is however the obligation of the Nigerian state to take full responsibility for the protection and welfare of the IDPs (Karp, 2020). The Nigerian state, African Union (AU) and the UNO recognizes this imperative in their various policy documents on IDPs. This policy document is derived from the fact that the primary responsibility of a state is to safeguard the wellbeing of its people.

2.2.2 Resettlement Conceptualized

Resettlement generally implies the relocation of people from their place of permanent residence to new location by state authorities, with consequences on their social wellbeing and associated discomfort (Akpanudoedehe, 2010). Relocation can be deliberate or planned and on the other hand, it can be a sudden or forceful undertaking with severe consequences for those affected. In this regards, the affected persons (AP) faces the crisis of adjustment to the new environment and with the mode or system of administration (Woube, 2005). Regardless of whatever form the relocation exercise takes, it brings with it some levels of strain to those affected, as evidenced in the displaced people of Bakassi. Displacement and resettlement often detaches people from their sources of livelihood, disrupts social and cultural cohesion and engenders conditions for insecurity and human right abuses (Cernea, 1991a; Tan & Yao, 2006). Thus effective resettlement plan should include criteria that seek to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the exercise. It must seek to protect and safeguard the human rights of the affected persons, the host community, as well as guarantee their sources of livelihood. And provide necessary incentive to restore social and cultural stability.

Effective resettlement process should also include monitoring involving data collection and analysis, progress assessment and reports, evaluation and adjustment (UNHCR, 2004; ADB, 2010; Cernea (2000)). The success of a resettlement programme is also contingent on the extent of government commitment to funding. As well as effective involvement of affected persons in the resettlement planning and implementation process. For adequate resettlement, experts are required to clearly classify the distinct ethnic, cultural, social and political configuration of the affected persons, as well as dietary requirements to guarantee a gradual return to their previous mode of life, and meet their immediate condition (Jubril, 2006; ADB, 2010).

2.2.3 Understanding Sustainability

Sustainability is a term used to indicate the viability or potential for durability under a long span of usage. It aim to support and preserve social capital by investing and creating services required for society development (Diesendorf, 2000). To ensure sustainability, initiative and programme strategies are put in place to develop, maximize, and preserve limited resource (<https://www.futurelearn.com>). According to Edwards (2009), the concept of sustainability incorporates the principles of sustainable development, which seeks to ensure a long-term means of exploitation without negatively impacting the environmental wellbeing. In economic sense it refers to ability of source of income to maintain itself and continues to operate without jeopardizing in the process, its source of supply. Sustainability also borders on managing resources from nature and to guarantee prolonged usage. Sustainability focuses on ensuring that there is maximize usage of available resource for productivity (Moore, 2010). Sustainability embodies four key pillars namely; human sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability (Feil and Schreiber, 2017). Edwards

(2009), added education to the four pillars; he argued that education is critical in ensuring the effective exploration of the pillars of sustainability for the sustenance of human existential needs, but conscious of the ecological needs. According to Diesendorf (2000), it is the duty of the government to guarantee sustainability by attending to the wellbeing of its member, and providing an atmosphere that engenders confidence for investment.

2.2.4 IDP Management in Nigeria

The Structure of IDP Management in Nigeria involves the Federal government, the international organizations with a very minimal role from the state government. IDP management is the responsibility of government institutions such as the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) for the Federal Government, while the state government makes use of the State Emergency Management Authority (SEMA). Both agencies have specific and general roles to play as provided in the Nigerian Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (NPIDP). It is the duty of NEMA and SEMA, to collaborate in evacuating people affected by disaster to a safer location such as the IDP camps (Shebbs, Ekwuribe and Iheonu, 2018). However, the effectiveness of these agencies and the synergy has not shown any effectiveness in the management of IDPs in Nigeria. According to Olukolajo (2014), IDPs management in Nigeria operates in a dysfunctional mode, lacking the structural and institutional framework and capacity for proper resettlement. It is characterized by mismanagement, ineptitude, corruption and fraud. There is no clear ideological understanding governing the processes of resettlement of IDPs, rather than providing makeshift locations, without a clear-cut plan of proper resettlement.

Human rights concerns are not often prioritized in the resettlement exercise,

causing the displaced to suffer existential challenges. Due to neglect and abandonment; IDPs are compelled to move from their camps into communities to fend for themselves and their families. In doing so, their wellbeing is further compromised as they seek refuge in unprotected places (Olukolajo, 2014). As observed by UNCHR 91.4% of IDPs displaced in 2014 live with their relatives while about 7.6% live in camps. And the few others who remain in the camps are mostly provided for daily by their family members who move out for menial jobs, as well as friends, and relatives, with little support from governmental and nongovernmental organizations (UNCHR, 2014).

IDP management is used as a form of political patronage; contracts are awarded at inflated cost and later abandoned, and monies allocated are embezzled to service personal and political goals, as considerations are not often placed on strict adherence to the Appropriation Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Olukolajo, 2014). The sum of N37,5bn relief material sent to Cross River for the displaced Bakassi people was declared missing, and regardless of calls for proper investigation, nothing was done (Bassey 2017). Humanitarian intervention in Nigeria as a channel of public looting is evident in the investigations on the former humanitarian intervention minister Sadiya Umar-Farouq accused of his ministry defrauding the nation of the sum of thirty seven billion naira (Agbo, 2024). Also is the case of Betta Edu, as investigated by the EFCC including the recovery of a combined total of ₦32.7bn and \$445,000 from the ministry, and exposed fraudulent links to 50 bank accounts (Sanusi, 2024).

As observed by Durosaro and Ajiboye (2011), Nigeria is largely dependent on international agencies for IDPs support in crisis situation, as it lacks overall funding capacity. It sees the local institutions as incompetent and adores the efforts of

international agencies that make donations in form of financial grants, aids, and humanitarians' interventions to provide for the welfare of IDPs. This excessive dependence negatively impacts on its obligatory sense of harnessing internal mechanisms in solving the problems of IDP management.

Displaced Bakassi Indigenes and IDPs Management

A study carried out by Ngalim (2019) reveals severe neglect of the displaced Bakassi indigenes, which were camped in dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms, without adequate provision of food and other basic items. He also observed that practical economic needs and meaningful participation in governance remained major concerns among the resettled Bakassi population, suggesting that the passage of time has not gradually led to addressing these issues. Rather, unresolved livelihood and governance issues continued to influence the relationship between the resettled population and the host environment. A study by Kanjal, (2016) on the impact of the resettlement programme on Bakassi IDPs, shows the lack of policy effort directed towards human capita development. It reveals that there are no adequate schools systems anywhere or any kind of training infrastructure in the resettlement area. Similar view was shared by Adeoye & Bamidele, (2025), that the Bakassi displacement crisis remains insufficiently addressed, with government responses often tending toward short-term relief and political expediency rather than comprehensive and durable solutions to the essentials of resettlement.

Ogaboh et al. (2010) examined the socioeconomic and cultural impacts of resettlement on displaced Bakassi people in Cross River State. The study demonstrates that the displacement produces consequences beyond the loss of physical residence, that it significantly affected respondents' occupations, cultural

practices and the patterns of housing. Also, Isokon (2016) examined the welfare and displacement status of settlers under the Bakassi Resettlement Programme. The study found evidence of status depreciation, impoverishment, loss of livelihood sources, stigmatization, discrimination, inadequate treatment and infringement of rights. Ngalim (2019) provides a broader longitudinal assessment by examining the post-conflict experiences of resettled Bakassi Peninsula people between 2006 and 2016. The study identified practical economic needs and meaningful participation in governance as major concerns among the resettled population. It further associated the continuing difficulties of resettlement with government insensitivity and corruption. This view is corroborated by the once chairman of the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed, that the federal government granted the sum of #37.5billion to the Cross River state government to mitigate the effect of the loss of 76 oil to Akwa Ibom state after Bakassi was handed over to Cameroon (Bassey, 2015). Ironically, this funds released have not had any measurable impact on the IDPs in the relocated settlements.

Furthermore, Isokon et al. (2021) examined social welfare programmes and the socioeconomic wellbeing of internally displaced persons in the Bakassi Resettlement Camp. The study found that welfare interventions were largely spontaneous, ad hoc, narrow and poorly coordinated. These shortcomings were associated with poverty, neglect and rights-related problems. The authors argued that failure to adapt social welfare policies to the peculiar circumstances of displaced persons weakened their socioeconomic wellbeing. According to Anietie (2022), it is remarkable to note that after due evaluation of the precarious living condition of displaced people of

Bakassi, a report was submitted for a 100billion special funding, with N250, 000 direct payment to APs. Unfortunately, this recommendation toward empowering the people did not materialize. And then the monthly conditional cash transfer programme started by Governor Liyel Imoke through which a monthly stipend of N5, 000 was paid to cushion the hardship faced by the returnees, was suddenly stopped in 2012.

The overall review identifies recurring concerns involving livelihood disruption, welfare inadequacy, socioeconomic vulnerability, participation and government responsiveness. The persistence of these concerns across time raises an important empirical question: to what extent has the resettlement programme actually produced sustainable socioeconomic outcomes for the displaced Bakassi population?

2.2.3 Guiding Principles in the Management of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

Section III of United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) deals on Principles relating to Protection during Displacement - Principle 18 states as follows;

1. All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living.
2. At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with and ensure safe access to:
 - (a) Essential food and potable water;
 - (b) Basic shelter and housing;
 - (c) Appropriate clothing; and
 - (d) Essential medical services and sanitation.
3. Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of women in the planning and distribution of these basic supplies.

Article IX (1-3) of the African Union convention for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa states the obligations of States Parties relating to Protection and Assistance during Internal Displacement as follows:

1. States Parties shall protect the rights of internally displaced persons regardless of the cause of displacement.

a) Take necessary measures to ensure that internally displaced persons are received, without discrimination of any kind and live in satisfactory conditions of safety, dignity and security;

b) Provide internally displaced persons to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, with adequate humanitarian assistance, which shall include food, water, shelter, medical care and other health services, sanitation, education, and any other necessary social services, and where appropriate, extend such assistance to local and host communities (Kampala Convention 2012).

Furthermore, the Responsibilities of the Federal and State governments regarding IDPs are contained in the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (NPIDP) (2012). It seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

a. Ensure the establishment of a comprehensive and gender responsive framework for national responsibility, coordination and collaboration with respect to protection, assistance and other humanitarian interventions related to internal displacement in Nigeria.

b. Provide for the respective obligations, responsibilities and roles of various agencies and institutions of government and non-state actors including communities, civil society organizations, armed groups, international humanitarian and development partners or any other relevant actors with respect to the prevention of internal displacement ,

protection of, and assistance to internally displaced persons in Nigeria;

c. Promote the fundamental human rights of all internally displaced persons in Nigeria and ensure their maximum access to protection and assistance without any form of discrimination whatsoever;

In the quest of proper resettlement of the people of displaced Bakassi Peninsula, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan set up a Presidential Committee on Proper Resettlement of Displaced Bakassi in 2013. The Committee report stated as follows;

1. Relocation of displaced Bakassi indigenes to an environment adequately support their occupations and sources of income for sustainability

2. Based on a well-designed blueprint, the federal government in collaboration with the state and local government should embark on provision of basic infrastructure in the relocations sites.

3. The sum of 100 billion was recommended by the committee as Special Fund for infrastructural development.

4. That the headquarters of the newly created Bakassi LGA should remain at Ikang, for the purpose of centrality, and that legislative constituency be created in the area for the purpose of effective representation

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Methods and Analysis

The study employed the qualitative research method. Two major sources of data collection namely; primary and secondary sources were adopted. The primary source of data adopted is semi-structured interview: An in-depth interview of key informants was conducted after identifying and verifying the biographic information of the displaced Bakassi indigenes, and other relevant

stakeholders. A carefully designed interview guide was used to conduct all interviews during the field exercise of this study (Babbie 2001). The thematic analysis approach was used in the analysis of data generated from the in-depth interview. Using the thematic approach, the meaning and pattern is determined via systematic interpretations of data, and findings of the study is derived from the most dominant, frequent or significant themes amongst the raw data. The finding is structured in line with related thematic statements or subheading developed during the transcription and coding stages (Thomas, 2006). The researcher relied on the result outcome in substantiating the various thematic statements made with reference to data obtained from the field. Furthermore, the secondary sources of data involved the use of documented materials such as textbooks, journal articles, magazines, media reports, and official publications etc., which were subjected to the content analysis approach.

3.3 Area of the Study

The New Bakassi is one of the 18 LGA of Cross River state, it was carved out of Akpabuyo Local Government Area on December 12, 1996. It is bounded in the East by the Republic of Cameroon, in the South by Equatorial Guinea and the Bight of Bonny, in the West by the Cross River Estuary, and North by Akpabuyo Local Government Area. It comprises of three major zones which includes Ikang North, Ikang South and Ikang Central, and delineated into ten political and administrative wards, regarded as districts namely; Abana, Akpankanya, Akwa, Ambai Ekpa, Amoto, Archibong, Atai Ema, Efut Iwang, Ekpote Abia, Odiong, its local Government headquarters is at Ikang (<https://www.legit.ng/1211230-18-local-governments-cross-river-state-headquarters.html>).

3.4 Population of the Study

The inhabitants of Bakassi LGA carved out of Akpabuyo Local Government Area, constitutes the population of the study. It has a projected population figure of 48,200 as of 2022 (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2022), National Bureau of Statistics (2022).

3.5 Sampling Techniques

For the in-depth interview, a total of Forty (40) respondents were purposively selected from three (3) of the ten wards that make up the LGA namely; Awka, Archibong and Ekpote Abia, which included male, female and youths. From the forty (40) respondents, ten (10) persons were interviewed from each ward, distributed between adult male, female and the youths respectively. Five (5) each was gotten from the government and its agencies, and another five (5) from local and international organizations

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section analyzed the effect of government resettlement programme on socioeconomic sustainability of displaced Bakassi indigenes (2009-2022). Data gathered from the structure interview and focused group discussion, as well as documentary evidences were analyzed. The analysis was guided by the policy performance indicators of the United Nations, the AU and the Nigerian government guidelines on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Findings from the analysis provided measurable answers to the research questions.

4.1 Thematic Analysis and Findings

Findings of the study were structured in relation to relevant thematic statements: Theme 1-5, which was developed during the transcription and coding stages. The findings and analysis are captured below.

Theme 1: Educational Levels and Displaced Bakassi Indigenes

A total of 10 representatives were selected from the key stakeholders in the

implementation of the Bakassi resettlement policies, which include Government and Agencies, among which are 4 males and 2 female participants in the interview sessions. These 6 respondents had a minimum of tertiary education and they were all senior officers in their respective agencies. In the same way, a total of 22 participants were

interviewed in the three purposively selected wards of Bakassi LGA (see tables 1, 2 and 3).

Tables 1-3 showing: Biographic information of displaced Bakassi indigenes interviewed in the 3 selected wards of the New Bakassi LGA

Table 1: Akwa – Ward 03

Gender	No.of parti.	Respondents Level of Education			Professional Skills	
		Tertiary	Secondary	Primary Edu.	Skilled	Unskilled
Male	5	1	2	2	2	3
Female	3	-	2	2	-	3
Total	8	1	4	4	2	6

Table 2: Archibong - Ward 06

Gender	No.of parti.	Respondents Level of Education			Professional Skills	
		Tertiary	Secondary	Primary Edu.	Skilled	Unskilled
Male	3	-	3	2	2	1
Female	4	-	1	2	1	3
Total	7	-	4	4	3	4

Table 3: Ekpote Abia – Ward 09

Gender	No.of parti.	Respondents Level of Education			Professional Skills	
		Tertiary	Secondary	Primary Edu.	Skilled	Unskilled
Male	3	-	2	1	-	3
Female	4	1	2	2	1	3
Total	7	1	4	3	1	6

In table 1, 2, 3 above, it is clear that in each of the three purposively selected wards 11 females and 11 males were interviewed in all. The data in these tables suggests that a majority of the interviewed displaced Bakassi indigenes have low levels of educational background.

Theme 2: Government/Stakeholders Commitment, Effective Planning and Implementation

The primary stakeholders in the government resettlement programme of displaced Bakassi indigenes include the government and agencies such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). Also inclusive is the United Nations Humanitarian Agencies, as well as local and international NGOs. The National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) and State Emergency

Management Authority (SEMA) are the primary inter-governmental agencies captured in the NPIDP. It is the duty of these agencies to identify and promptly assist in the evacuation and relocation of displaced persons from location of threat to a safer location (Shebbs, Ekwuribe and Iheonu, 2018).

However, responses from the interviewees suggest the contrary: An interviewee stated the lack of attention given to them by the critical agencies in times need, especially in the supply of relief material when disaster struck e.g heavy downpour associated with flooding, and destruction of lives and properties. Another respondent stated at the initial stages of the resettlement, the APs were asked to fill forms for empowerment programme but they never return. Other respondent lament the diversion of relief materials and embezzlement of fund meant for them. A monarch revealed that the N37.5 billion said to have been released by the federal government to cross river state government for the resettlement of the displaced Bakassi people has not been accounted for.

Theme 3: Government Resettlement Program and Human Capital Development

Human capital development is the basis for societal transformation and self-sustenance of the people. It entails investments in education systems, knowledge and skills (Benn, 2014). One of the interviewee, the general coordinator, once in charge of two resettlement centers in Bakassi LGA, stated that the people are seriously aggrieved over their children's inability to go to school. That there is lack of adequate school system and training centres to nurture and develop children. He further argue that what exist in Bakassi LGA are makeshift schools that are non-conducive for learning. As such, youngsters in displacement camps engaged in unlawful and criminal activities,

constituting nuisance to the wellbeing of the community. While idle Youths compelled to join insurgent groups, and oil bunkery as means of engagement (Eguzozie & Mike Abang, 2017).

Theme 4: Government Resettlement Program and Social and Economic Welfare

Responses indicates that shelter is grossly inadequate compared to the number of displaced persons. According to IDPs interviewed, at the initial state of the resettlement, those with shelters were asked to accommodate those are yet to be given space for shelter on the average of three to five persons in a room, without basic relief materials. Also, the displaced persons were sheltered in environments that lacked privacy and comfort. According to the chairman of the Traditional Rulers' Council and the paramount ruler of Bakassi; the Federal Government had failed to act on the report that was submitted years ago. That the N37.5 billion released by the federal government to cross river state government for the resettlement of the displaced Bakassi people was not accounted for.

A camp leader further explained that among the 5000 returnees in 2013, majority of them are still displaced, without government attention. And that, despite written letters and visitations to the government house, no response has been recorded. That most of the 5,000 displaced persons that moved into the camp in 2013, have dispersed due to lack of shelter and the poor habitable conditions. He stated that inadequate shelter and overcrowding have been the main cause of the transmission of diseases, with epidemic such as acute respiratory infections, meningitis, typhus, cholera, scabies, etc. One of the interviewee lamented the leakage of roof, that when it

rains, they worked through the night secure their items.

One of the interviewee stated that the health care centers for the displaced Bakassi indigenes are deplorable and inadequate. It is ill-equipped and has no permanent health workers attached to it. That the health center engages in immunization vaccines, free 'small-small' drugs, and other minor health care services to the IDPs. And that outbreak of diseases and health situation is a common occurrence due to overcrowding in the few accommodations provided, as well as inadequate and unsafe water supply, poor sanitation and poor waste disposal, and water crisis.

Regarding security, some respondent reveal that the only police office in the Bakassi LGA do not have police officers sent to it. And that the heavy military presence seen in the area is due to high level of militant activities. And that there is always a clash between groups in New Bakassi and Akpabuyo Local Government Area (LGA).

One of the interviewee reveals that they have the face challenges of political participation in elections, due to non-recognition of the New Bakassi LGA by the federal government. That registered voters in the newly created LGA are largely cut-off or disenfranchised during elections. One of the interviewee, who is a former chairman of Bakassi LGA laments the inability to cast his vote in the 2023 elections. He stated that in the in the 2023 presidential and national assembly elections, voting did not take place in ten wards in Bakassi polling units in the Dayspring spring, Abana, and Odion wards.

Theme 5: The Challenge of Economic Opportunity/Engagement

From the views of respondents, their major occupation has been fishing and net-

making, but with their relocation to the new Bakassi local government, they can no longer engage in this economic activities. And regardless of promise made by the federal and state government to guarantee economic sustainability nothing has changed. A male interviewee stated that some of them who have lived their lives as fishermen on the Peninsula were relocated to landlocked areas, where they had no access to fishing, as their new homes are located far from the sea. That he now survive on mending and sales of fishing nets. A female participant stated that food supply remains a major challenge to them, as they lack the provision of basic food items needed for preparing daily meals for their families. That the last financial assistant they receive was the monthly conditional cash transfer programme started by Governor Liyel Imoke through which a monthly stipend of N5, 000 but was discontinued since 2012. The secretary of the returnee association lamented the incessant deaths among the Bakassi returnees due to starvation, as what they get from charity and donations is barely enough.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The thematic analysis of data generated through the interview session, including content analysis of secondary data suggests that the resettlement programme of government has not led to effective resettlement of displaced Bakassi indigenes to the extent that their socioeconomic sustainability is guaranteed.

Findings from theme 2, which focused on government/stakeholders commitment and effective planning and implementation reveals the failure of government to meet the required expectations of APs. This common view corroborate the arguments by Anietie (2022); Adeoye & Bamidele, (2025); Bassey 2017 and Ngalim (2019) that empowerment programmes designed to assist the people is truncated or

reversed, and that funds and relief material are either diverted, mismanaged or embezzled leaving the IDPs in precarious conditions.

Findings from theme 3, bordering on human capita development, suggest that government resettlement programme have not address the issues of adequate formal and non-formal education opportunities for children and youths of displaced Bakassi indigenes. This finding aligns with Kanjal (2016) and Ngalim (2019) that there are no adequate school systems to provide basic education and non-formal education for the people. And that the few available schools/classrooms are overcrowded and poor conditions. As such children and youths, who are meant to be productive, waste idly and engage in nefarious activities.

Findings from theme 4 bordering on social and economic welfare suggests that; the displaced Bakassi indigenes lack adequate shelter, poor public health facilities, lack of security infrastructure, as well as social and political exclusion. This finding aligns with the views of Olukolajo (2014); UNCHR (2014); Adeoye & Bamidele (2025); Ogaboh et al. (2010); Agbo (2012) and Isokon (2016) on the issues bordering on; insufficiency of accommodation measured against the influx of displaced persons. Their work reveals that IDPs sleep makeshift spaces like classroom without electricity, without ventilations, and without critical relief materials, such as food items, cloths, beddings, tent, etc, without financial support. Their studies also align with the interviewee position that IDPs are sheltered in unhealthy environment, lacking privacy and devoid of human dignity. It reveals the lack of adequate attention on the imperative of effective security for the safety of lives and properties. And that government response often tends towards short-term relief, rather than comprehensive and durable solutions to resettlement and

reintegration. Furthermore, the poor resettlement programme continues to jeopardized APs occupations, cultural practices, human rights and dignity, and accommodation patterns. Their work corroborates the claims of political disenfranchisement and representation. And that the poor resettlement programme is characterized by lack of social infrastructure like electricity, potable water, and adequate means of communication due to poor networks coverage.

Theme 5 focused on the challenge of economic opportunity/engagement. This finding aligns with Adeoye and Bamidele (2025); Kanjal (2016); Akate (2010); Isokon (2016) and Ngalim's (2019) that the resettlement programme has not provided the means of independent economic engagement necessary for the self-sustainability of the IDPs . That the IDPs suffer from loss of livelihoods and insufficient participation as significant dimensions of the resettlement experience. And that, the salient issues of inadequate livelihood opportunities, weak infrastructure, limited access to productive resources and minimal participation, may reproduce rather than resolve displacement-related vulnerability.

5. Conclusion

This study focused on the effect of government resettlement programmes on socio-economic sustainability of displaced Bakassi indigenes of cross river state. The empirical finding demonstrates that the Bakassi resettlement experience has remained characterized by a considerable gap between physical relocation and sustainable socioeconomic recovery. As argued, effective resettlement requires the restoration of livelihoods, adequate socioeconomic infrastructure, and access to productive opportunities, as well as social integration, effective public services, security, participation and the capacity of displaced persons to achieve a

reasonable degree of self-reliance (Ogaboh et al., 2010). However, more than two decades after the landmark ICJ verdict, the indigenous people of Bakassi remained displaced, and still living in deplorable conditions, as there is no evidence of adequate settlement that provided them with basic necessities to return to their occupations. They lacked the needed infrastructures for human capital development, and security to ensure the safety of lives and properties (Undiyaundeye, 2017).

As the findings suggest, there is no evidence of the people participation in matters that affect their wellbeing. There is also evidences that identify the issues of status depreciation, impoverishment, loss of livelihood sources, and discrimination. These findings implies that the central challenge is not only the absence of a physical settlement, but the failure to sufficiently reconstruct the socioeconomic foundations upon which displaced persons can build sustainable lives (Isokon, 2016). The study therefore concludes that the fundamental weakness of the Bakassi resettlement programme lies in the insufficient conversion of relocation into sustainable socioeconomic recovery. And the persistence of these deficiencies over time indicates that resettlement should be understood as a continuing development and reintegration process rather than as a one-time governmental intervention.

6. Recommendations

After a careful analysis of resettlement and sustainability challenges of the displaced Bakassi indigenes, the study recommends the following;

1. Government should develop a workable blue-print regarding policy and implementation timelines for proper resettlement. This is in line with ADB (2010), that a proper resettlement requires

effective planning, implementation and evaluation of resettlement schemes.

2. Government should be more deliberate about proper compensation for those who are displaced, with conscious effort aimed at protecting and preserving their human right and dignity. Also critical is to ensure the preservation of people's source of livelihood; and where this is practically impossible, commensurable alternatives should be provided.

3. Attention should be paid to critical areas of social welfare such as education, healthcare, skill acquisition, including public infrastructure such as roads, agricultural equipment, effective telecommunications network, pipe-borne water.

4. To forestall insecurity and guarantee the security of lives and properties, the government should endeavor to setup effective real-time security structures for the safety of lives and properties of Bakassi returnees. To check border incursions and guarantee sustainable peace that will enable sustainable development to thrive in Nigeria-Cameroon cross border, there is need for the establishment of a joint security partnership between Nigeria and Cameroon. Also corporation should be in the area of harnessing ecological resources around their redefined common border.

5. And finally, the study recommends sustainable policy response which should move from a predominantly relief-oriented model to a development-oriented and participatory resettlement strategy. This participatory model should take a bottom-top approach to addressing the issue IDPs. This will imply allocating judicious role to the third-tier of government with a view to effectively engaging local authorities and community groups in whose juridical purview the IDPs are located. It is logically justifiable to fully integrate the

local system in the management of IDPs, with cognizance of the fact that local area becomes the primary recipient of the negative consequences of a failed resettlement effort (Shebbs, Agbor & Uduma, 2022). Such a strategy will facilitate prioritizing the livelihood reconstruction, skills acquisition, employment and enterprise development. It will also facilitate adequate housing, access to education, healthcare, water, sanitation and transportation. It should also address social integration and political inclusion so that displaced Bakassi Indigenes are not treated as permanent recipients of government assistance (Ngalim, 2019).

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