Impact Assessment of Violent Conflict and Internal Displacement on Housing and Shelter in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State

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Abstract

The housing crisis affecting displaced persons and the need for a holistic strategy to achieve durable solutions necessitated this study. The study examines the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on housing and shelter conditions in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State, Nigeria. Violent conflict has been a primary driver of internal displacement in the region, leading to significant loss of life and disrupting the socioeconomic fabric of affected communities. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the quantitative component involved surveying 380 households selected from a total population of 37,665 internally displaced households across the Local Government Areas of Barkin Ladi, Bassa, and Riyom. A purposive sampling was further used to administer interviews to 9 key informant respondents and 10 in- depth interviewees. Human needs theory was used as a framework of analysis. Findings from the quantitative analysis indicate substantial housing destruction, inadequate shelter provision, and increased exposure to precarious living conditions. These results are reflected in the qualitative data, where respondents reported widespread demolition of homes and displacement to less secure environments, along with inadequate financial support for housing reconstruction. Additionally, the study found that mass migration has contributed to the desolation of several affected villages. The study calls for stringent government intervention, including proactive measures to mitigate community conflict and address external factors that exacerbate these crises.

Keywords: Violent, Conflict, Internal displacement, Housing, Plateau State.

Introduction

Housing is a fundamental need of every household because it is the source of safety, security and protection against external threats. It is considered "a place which protects privacy, contributes to psychological well-being, and supports the development and social integration of its inhabitants – a central place for human life' (Bonnefoy, 2007). Shelter is a habitable covered living space providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity (UNHCR, 2016). Adequate housing is necessary for the household's mental, physical and economic well-being. The lack of housing is exposing the entire household to all the vices and threats. Generally, violent conflict is accompanied by the destruction of houses and the displacement of a large number of the population, which can have a long-lasting effect on the affected households. Violent conflict has devastating impacts on households, communities, infrastructures and housing.

Violent conflict arises when two or more groups engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power, and resources to destabilize the other group, which may result in injuring or even eliminating them (Jeong,2000). Any attitude or action capable of causing negative change in the social or political environment is likely to culminate in violent conflict. Fre're and Wilen (2015)

conceived violence as "conflict that involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests.

Plateau North Senatorial District has experienced a series of violent conflicts that have led to internal population displacement, with an overall negative impact on household housing. Rural communities across Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa Local Government Areas were forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of armed conflict, and sort for safety, particularly and in larger proportion within the Jos metropolis (Yusuf, 2017). For instance, in Barkin Ladi,Local Government Area, rural communities such as Nding, Marit, Gashish, Rarin, Ganaropp, with many more had experienced invasion, displacement and destruction of houses of varying degrees. The same scenario also took place in Jol, Lwa, Shonong, Darwat, Tanjol, Rakul, Rafin Acha, Tarai, and Rakweng in Riyom Local Governmetnt. Bassa Local Government also have rural communities like Kwall, Zikke, Kimakpa, Kizachi, Rikwe-chongu among many others with incessant invasion and wanton destruction of lives and properties.

The conflict led to displacement and destruction of property, thereby forcing the households into a housing crisis. Persons who share the same living accommodation, who pool some, or all, of their income and wealth and who consume certain types of goods and services collectively, mainly housing and food, in their communities, suddenly become homeless (United Nations Statistics Division, 1993). The resource expenditures and activities they usually share are lost to the conflict (Casimir & Tobi, 2011). The impact affects not only the physical structures but also the emotional and mental health of all household members. The violent conflicts experienced in this senatorial district have created long-term housing insecurity, posing a major challenge for most affected households in accessing stable and affordable housing. This situation results in a lack of housing satisfaction, overcrowding, and insufficient basic amenities. This, therefore necessitated an empirical investigation into the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household housing and shelter in Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Bassa Local Government Areas of the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.

Conceptual and Empirical Review

Conflict and internal displacement have major consequences on the affected population by removing them from their homes to a place without shelter. In every community that is faced with violent conflict, housing and accommodation are a serious problem that needs immediate attention. Access to shelter and accommodation is essential for one's dignity, privacy, health, and physical and social protection. It is a universal human right. Most IDPs move out of the conflict areas to safer zones to squat with either friends or family who are not affected by the conflict.

The conflict situation leads to overcrowding of households confining them to communities with inadequate facilities. The host families or communities are not always prepared for the inflow of IDPs, which also poses a challenge in coping with the situation. The IDPs who do not have families to move with usually take shelter in schools, churches, mosques, or other public facilities. In most cases, living in such an overcrowded environment always has a series of problems which range from poor sanitary hygiene, lack of good water, lack of privacy, lack of security and a host of other issues related to the condition.

In a conflict situation, the primary needs for the IDPs are immediate temporary shelter for the newly displaced and a long-term shelter for the growing IDP population in urban areas. The need for long-term shelter is that the IDPs are subject to being evicted from these lands at any moment (Women's Communion for Refugee Women and Children, 1999). The IDP camps, when established, are normally constructed as temporary structures, and the atmosphere is mostly not favorable, which often tends to suggest that the IDPs are forced to adjust to the challenges of life. In some instances, when the IDPs move to a safe community, the cost of accommodation is enormous due to population inflow, thereby negatively impacting the family's sources of livelihood and standard of living.

The study by Abdu and Pathirage (2017) focused on the need for the reconstruction of affordable housing for the internally displaced people caused by the Boko Haram conflict in Maiduguri of Borno State of Nigeria. The study found that the need for post-conflict reconstruction of housing is significant towards achieving sustainable peace and development. It further stressed that the internally displaced people in Nigeria, especially women and children, will continue to be exposed to environmental and manmade disasters until affordable housing is made available by the Nigerian Government. The limitation of the study is in the method of data collection, which was based on a literature review. The data may not be a true representation and opinion of the displaced people. A detailed and comprehensive research methodology is required for a study of this magnitude. However, the study has a connection with the present study on the plight of the displaced household regarding the problem of housing and shelter.

Saleh, Enshassi, and Sundermeier (2022) carried out a study on women's empowerment in post-conflict housing reconstruction in Palestine. The focus of the study was to provide an insight into the experience of women's empowerment in post-disaster housing reconstruction (PDHR) in Gaza. A quantitative research method was used in conducting the study. The findings of the study revealed the three most important priorities of women empowerment to be: ensuring the rights of land titles for female-headed households in the RDHR, equal distribution of financial assistance to both genders as well and equal access to resources and information related to reconstruction. The study's limitation is that it focused only on the right of land for women, neglecting other impacts caused by the conflict on female-headed households. The single method of research conducted will hinder other information because of its inability to cover a wide range. The research is aligned with the present study as it acknowledged the difficulties faced by households as regard housing in conflict areas.

Jacobs and Kyamusuguwa (2018) conducted a study on everyday justice for the internally displaced in a context of fragility: A case study of the democratic republic of Congo (DRC). The focus of the study is on the plight of the displaced persons in Bukavu. A mixed research method was adopted to examine the plight of the displaced persons in the host community. The study revealed that most of the host communities do not feel safe accommodating strangers with the fear of harboring criminals, witches, etc. As a result, some of the host community refuses to accept the IDPs because of the feeling of insecurity. It further found that the displaced persons suffer marginalization, stigmatization, and discrimination in the host communities and are denied participation in community activities. The study was conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is geographically different from the study area, thus it cannot be generalized.

Aliyu, Kasim, Martin, and Masirin (2012) conducted a study on the impact of violent ethnoreligious conflict on residential property value determination in Jos metropolis of Northern Nigeria: Regression analysis results. The focus of the study was to examine the impact of violent ethno-religious conflicts on residential property within Jos metropolis. A mixed research method was adopted for the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used in generating data for the research. The study found that there is a strong relationship between violent ethno-religious conflicts and people's decisions on where to reside. The study was to examine the impact of the violent ethno-religious conflicts on residential property, while this study is on the impact of violent conflict on household housing/shelter. International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC 2021) researched the displaced by violence in Jos. The study revealed that the level of housing available to the displaced persons has a significant effect on their living conditions. In addition, most respondents report that they struggle to pay rent in Jos. It further revealed that prior to the displacement, 93% of the internally displaced persons had their homes, but most of the IDPs now squat with other families or live in collective shelters or homes donated by the local authorities. The internally displaced persons are faced with various challenges as regards to shelter and accommodation. With no cash to pay for the exorbitant prices that most landlords in the host communities demand, they are forced to resort to the available option, even if the living conditions are unfavorable.

The households have no option but to live in a substandard or deplorable structure, which serves as a shelter or accommodation to them. The poor IDP households are more affected by the displacement, as having access to a comfortable accommodation is almost impossible, while those with a reserve of capital get a comfortable accommodation easily. The destruction of the household's livelihood, most especially as regards the household's income, causes some of these households to stay longer in the IDP camps, depending solely on the aid that is available in the camp. Most of the IDPs have it very difficult to find a secure and sustainable shelter, due to their inability to raise the monthly rent. In most cases, the rent areas accumulate and result in eviction from the premises by the house owner. This further aggravates their vulnerable situation. Shelter and accommodation are the most important forms of security for any household. The absences of shelter and accommodation pose a great threat to the entire household's security. Having a comfortable and sustainable shelter and accommodation also serves as a source of identity for the individual household.

The impact of conflict and internal displacement on households' shelter/housing is an important issue that attracted researchers to the study. Moore (2017), in a paper titled "Refugee Settlement and Sustainable Planning, the case of M'Bera in Mauritania analyzed the situation in refugees' settlement. Around 46,000 people fled conflict and insecurity in northern Mali since 2012 and live in M'Bera camp, southeast maintains, with around 100 people arriving weekly. The shelter approach initially designed was to provide tents and simple shelters for kids, consisting of plastic sheeting and a fix. But the entire camp has been upgraded from the beginning of 2015, using a system of canvas and timber construction. This has allowed the refugees' families access to an improved shelter. The long-term needs of M'Bera in the settlement are becoming clearer with the long duration of the camp, which has made it necessary for the increasing formalisation of the settlement. It is estimated that the life span of a refugee camp is 17 years, with such a settlement gradually developing into a new town. Considering this fact, what role do the host

governments and the humanitarian community have in the initial camp planning process? Can these sustainable planning approaches be utilized? How can settlements be managed so that the physical and social environment is enhanced in the long term?

Most camps are constructed in response to rapid displacement, and in many cases are planned incrementally and even retrospectively in attempts to impose order and chaotic, and hoc camp layouts. Water and sanitation, shelter, drainage, access roads and physical locations for the provision of health, education and other services may be part of the initial plan in the camp, but having a long-term plan as part of the design is not possible. The reasons are due to political resistance, funding limitations and lack of agreement on duration. The recommendation of the study is that the aspirations of the refugee community and the host community need to be jointly taken into consideration for any long-term solution. Joint planning processes between the refugees, host communities and government need to be established in the development plan to enhance social cohesion and resource management are crucial in planning decisions. The gaps in the studies reviewed include the combined effect of violent conflict and internal displacement on household housing and shelter, the inability to take into consideration the challenges faced by the individual households, and the differentials in location, period and methodology.

Theoretical Analysis: Human Needs Theory

Human needs theory was propounded by John Burton (1990). The theory proposes that all humans have certain basic universal needs that must be met. When those needs are not met, conflict is likely to occur and it attendant consequences will last longer than necessary. Abraham Maslow (1973) proposed a hierarchy of needs which begins with food, water, and shelter, which is followed by the need for security, personal fulfilment and self-actualization. In addition to the earlier mentioned needs, Maslow (1973) proposed self-transcendence as a need above self-actualization in the hierarchy of needs. Human needs theory is based on the idea that certain needs are essential for survival. These needs are not food, water, shelter, and both physical and non-physical elements that humans are instinctively drawn to.

Burton (1991) cited in Dawn (2015) analyzed the denial and frustration of such human needs as the root cause of conflict or the reason for unresolved conflict. He also pointed out that people are incapable of existing peacefully without the fulfilment of their needs. The satisfaction of basic needs is central to the functioning of social and political institutions. The needs perspective focuses attention on a set of collective psychological needs, which includes needs for identity, security, recognition, participation, dignity and justice. When the individuals or groups perceive threats or failure to fulfil these needs, conflict will be inevitable. These needs act as a driving force in all humans' lives and as a result, individuals, groups or groups can use any means to satisfy their needs.

Even though human needs theory could not give a concrete or stable way of identifying and prioritizing human needs, it has a strong belief that satisfying human needs will result to stability in society. The theory recognizes that the denial of basic human needs leads to frustration of which is the root cause of the communal conflict in a divided society. Plateau North Senatorial District had a series of violent conflicts in recent times, and all these were rooted in the needs of the parties involved not being met. The indigenous people, on their part,

have the need to be in control of the entire system, while the settlers also have the need of identity and belonging. Each party feel deprived of its needs as thus the eruption of conflict.

As regards the farmers and Fulani-herdsmen attacks, the farmers need their crops to survive on which is the source of their livelihood, while the herdsmen also need the land for grazing of their cattle, which is also the source of their livelihood. The infringement will lead to conflict. Human need theory stresses that the source or origin of disputes is the needs of the parties involved that are yet to be met. It also explains how the other party feels when their needs are deprived. It emphasized the satisfaction of needs essential for human beings that is required for survival, which, when compromised, act as a major source of conflict.

Research Method
The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis approaches. A Descriptive and Cross-Sectional Survey research design was used to gather data from a representative sample of the affected population. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection tools, ensuring both breadth and depth in understanding the issues. The population of the study comprised the 37,665 internally displaced households in the selected Local Government areas of Barkin Ladi, Bassa, and Riyom. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire to the sampled 380 households as determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). A purposive sampling was further used to administer interviews to 9 key informant respondents and 10 in-depth interviewees. Descriptive tools such as frequency, percentage and tables were used for quantitative data analysis, while thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

Results and Discussions

The demographic characteristics of the respondents, including marital status, level of education, occupation, and local government areas, are summarized and presented in Table 1. The participant's background information profile provides insight into the makeup of the population included in the study sample.

Table 1
Socio – Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Marital Status:		
Single	88	26.3
Married	198	59.1
Widowed	44	13.1
Divorced	5	1.5
Total	*335*	*100*
Educational Level:		
Non-formal	14	2.4
Primary	20	6.0
Secondary	178	53.1
Tertiary	123	36.7
Total	*335*	*100*
Occupation:		

Casual worker	46	13.7
Civil servant	36	10.7
Business	91	27.2
Farmer	162	48.4
Total	*335*	*100*
Local Government:		
Barkin Ladi	168	50.1
Bassa	67	11.9
Riyom	127	37.9
Total	*335*	*100*

Source: Field work (2024).

The data in Table 1 shows that more than half (59.1%) of the respondents were married individuals. More married respondents imply providing strong insights into family dynamics in this study. More so, more than half (53.1%) of the respondents have attained a secondary school level of education. The occupational activities of respondents are more of farmers (48.4%) and business individuals (27.2%). This justifies the fact that the communities surveyed are predominantly farmers and traders. Regarding the local government of respondents, half (50.1%) of the participants resided in Barkin Ladi LGA. This background information of respondents demonstrates the personality, maturity and quality of individuals in the survey, reflecting the questionnaire and interview details. Furthermore, the blend of the respondents as evaluated can enhance contextual understanding in interpreting the research findings, ultimately leading to more informed decision-making.

Table 2

Impact of Violent Conflicts and Internal Displacements on Household Housing/Shelter

Item	SA F (%)	A F (%)	U F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	Total
My house was destroyed as a result of violent conflict and internal displacement	74(22.1)	159(47.5)	5(1.5)	46(13.7)	51(15.2)	335
I was forced to move out from my home to other destination due to violent conflict and internal displacement	96(28.7)	101(30.1)	35(10.4)	90(26.9)	13(3.9)	335
Violent conflict and internal displacement cause inadequate shelter for my family	142(42.4)	169(50.4)	6(1.8)	13(3.9)	5(1.5)	335
No financial support to rebuild my house	94(28.1)	108(32.2)	54(16.1)	69(20.6)	10(3.0)	335

	SA	A	U	D	SD	
Mass displacement of the population was experienced due to violent conflict and internal displacement	178(53.1)	142(42.4)	5(1.5)	8(2.4)	2(0.6)	335
Mean Percentage	**34.9**	**40.5**	**6.3**	**12.8**	**4.8**	

Key: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; U=Undecided; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree
Source: Field work (2024).

Table 2 presents the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household housing and shelter. The majority of the respondents agreed to this assertion as reflected in the mean of 40.5. Specifically, 159 (47.5) of the respondents stated that their houses were destroyed as a result of violent conflict and internal displacement, 101 (30.1%) observed that they were forced to move out from my home to other destination due to violent conflict and internal displacement, 169 (50.4) agreed that violent conflict and internal displacement cause inadequate shelter for their families, 108(32.2) stated that there was no financial support to rebuild their houses, while 178 (53.1%) mentioned that mass displacement of the population was experienced due to violent conflict and internal displacement. These reasons are considered by respondents to have a significant impact on shelter, as indicated by the majority (75.4%) of them. considering the weighted mean of 19.9%, the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household shelter/housing seems high, with the mean percentage of 40.5% (overall 75.4%).

Responses from the KII and IDI further present findings on the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household housing and shelter. In answering the question whether houses in the community are visible, the respondent stated that … Oh no, it's not a natural calamity. The heated conflict caused them to be destroyed by fire. The families do not have a place to live, so they are currently residing in IDP camps (KII 4). "I had my house damaged. Just to have a roof over our heads, I transferred my family to the community secondary school. Imagine the trauma that my entire family is experiencing (KII 7, IDI, 1, 2, & 3). What the killers do is set fire to the houses, key or harm those trying to escape, and continue to use the land for grazing (KII 5).

These murderers have taken over about three of our ancestral lands." But consider us as refugees in this land that God has given us. I just cannot comprehend this kind of existence (KII 6). ...my possessions ruined. I am left defenceless and driven from my territory (KII 7). When asked whether there was adequate shelter for victims or those displaced during and after the conflict. IDI: Participant 1: …Yes, many of us lost our homes, in fact, our community was almost all displaced due to the losses we incurred, our houses were burnt down, the church and school were all destroyed, many people lost their lives. Participant 4:. No special place was provided, except that the camp was overcrowded, so some of us, especially men, had to leave the camp for the women and children. Themes from the qualitative data showed destruction of houses, inadequate shelter, exposure and precarious lifestyle. This implies that violent conflict and internal displacement grossly affect households, particularly in housing and shelter.

Discussion
The findings on the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement revealed that there was destruction of houses, inadequate shelter and exposure to precarious lifestyles. The findings on the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household housing and shelter are further seen by the results, where the respondents, interviewees and key informants affirmed that houses were destroyed, and some were forced to move out of their homes to other destinations due to insecurity. The shelters available to the households are inadequate and financial support to rebuild houses, but there is mass migration, causing most of the affected villages to be desolate.

The findings agreed with the studies conducted by Abdu and Pathirage (2017), which found that the need for post-conflict reconstruction of affordable housing is significant towards achieving sustainable peace and development. Similarly, in confirmation of the findings of the study, a study conducted by Saleh etal (2022) found that ensuring the rights of land titles for female-headed households and equal distribution of financial assistance to both genders, as well as equal access to resources and information related to reconstruction. The findings of the study aligned with the findings of a study by Jacob and Kyamusuguwa (2018) that revealed the unwillingness of most of the host communities to accommodate the IDPs because they don't feel safe harboring strangers, and they also suffered marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination.

The findings of the study are further in tandem with the findings of IDMC (2021), which asserts that the level of housing available to displaced persons has a significant effect on their living conditions, and most of them struggled to pay their rent. It further revealed that most of the IDPs squatted with other families or lived in collective shelters or homes donated by the local authorities. The above discussion shows that the displaced households are faced with various challenges as regard to shelter and accommodation. This confirmed the findings of the study that is revealed in the plight of the victims of violent conflict and internal displacement in Plateau North Senatorial District as is further confirmed by the interviewees and the key informants who explained that their houses were destroyed and life has not been easy as most of them now squad with relations and friends, some live in camps, some of them in substandard houses and expose to danger.

The findings are further supported by the human needs theory, with the premise that denial of basic human needs can lead to conflict and also prolong the overwhelming consequences of an existing conflict. Violent conflict and internal displacement usually threaten basic human needs. Understanding the impact of violent conflict and internal displacement on household livelihood using the human needs theory emphasize the need for in-depth measures to address the needs of the affected households in Plateau North Senatorial District.

Conclusion
This study recognizes that violent conflict and inter displacement will be a continuous problem to households' housing and shelter in the Plateau North senatorial district if not curtailed. The destruction of homes and infrastructure in conflicts leads to long-term housing insecurity. It renders the household vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, insecurity and health issues.

Recommendation

This study also identified the following recommendation as stated below:

i.   Adequate preventive measures should be taken in forestalling conflict situation along community lines, and to identify external factors that are involved in the conflict.

ii. There is a need for collaboration between the state government, local government and the host community to construct affordable houses for the resettlement of internally displaced households in conflict affected areas.

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