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### ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF INTERNALLY DISPALCED PERSONS ON THE HOST COMMUNITIES IN GOMBE TOWN NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

*Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups of people who have been forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence due to conflicts, violence, human rights violations, natural disasters, or other reasons but remain within the borders of their own country. This study aims to explore the impact of IDPs on host communities in Gombe town, focusing on both the positive and negative effects. A mixed-methods approach was employed to gather comprehensive data on the impact of the IDP presence on the host communities. The primary sources of data were key informant interviews, questionnaire administration, and surveys conducted among host community members to assess their perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal both positive and negative effects of the IDP presence on host communities. The majority (65%) of the IDPs reside in Pantami and its environs, which present opportunities for social cohesion, economic growth, and cultural exchange. Additionally, the study revealed increased demand for food ( $\bar{x}=3.7$ ), increased risk of disease outbreaks ( $\bar{x}=3.7$ ), and pressure on infrastructure and services ( $\bar{x}=3.7$ ) as constraints on the host community. The study reveals that the presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has both positive and negative impacts on host communities. While they boost local businesses and cultural exchange, they also strain resources and increase the risk of disease outbreaks. To maximize benefits, targeted interventions like healthcare, sustainable food security programs, and infrastructure development are recommended.*

**Keywords: Assessment, Internally Displaced Persons, Host communities, Impact, Gombe**

#### INTRODUCTION

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups of people who have been forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence due to conflicts, violence, human rights violations, natural disasters, or other reasons, but remain within the borders of their own country (Olaoye, 2022). Unlike refugees, who cross international borders, IDPs stay within their country's territory. The term "internally displaced persons" was formalized by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in UNDP (1998).

The increase in conflict-induced displacement and natural disasters has led to a significant rise in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) worldwide. These individuals and families seek refuge in host communities, often facing numerous challenges related to their displacement (Adamu, 2019). The impact of IDPs on host communities is a multifaceted issue that requires in-depth analysis to understand the social, economic, and environmental consequences. Gombe State, located in northeastern Nigeria, has experienced a significant influx of internally displaced persons due to various factors, particularly the insurgency carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist



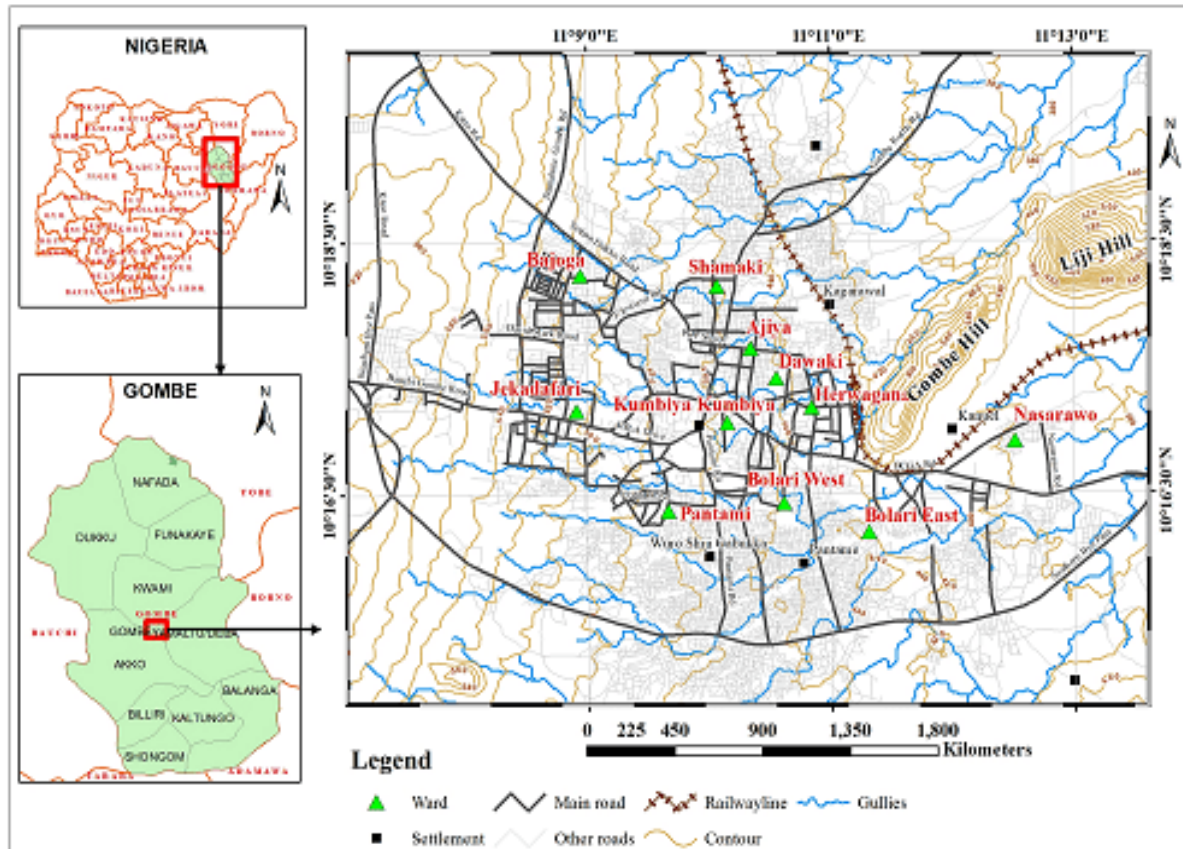
group and communal conflicts. This has led to the displacement of thousands of individuals and families within the state's borders. (Abubakar,2022)

The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in the early 2000s, has resulted in widespread displacement across northeastern Nigeria, including Gombe State. The group's activities have led to violent attacks, destruction of property, and mass displacement of civilians. (Saka & Bojang, 2022). As a result, Gombe State has become a host to a considerable number of IDPs who have fled their homes in neighboring states such as Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. Limited comprehensive study has been carried out to assess the impact of IDPs on the host communities, This gap suggests a need for localized studies that thoroughly examine the socio-economic, environmental, and cultural impacts of hosting IDPs in this particular area, while other studies focus on the short impacts short-term effects of hosting IDPs, such as immediate strain on resources or infrastructure. However, there is the need to fill the gap in understanding the long-term consequences of hosting IDPs in Gombe Town.so this work is set to fill the aforementioned gap. This study aims to explore the impact of IDPs on host communities in Gombe Metropolis, focusing on both the positive and negative effects.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The Study Area**

Gombe town is located between latitudes  $10^{\circ}$  N to  $10^{\circ}$  20'N and longitudes  $11^{\circ}$  01''E and  $11^{\circ}$  19'E. It shares common boundary with Akko, LGA in the south and West, Yamaltu Deba to the east and Kwami to the North. It is the capital of Gombe State and occupied an area of  $45\text{km}^2$  (Usman A. 2023)



**Figure 1: Map of Gombe State showing the Study Area.**

**Source:** Nigerian Centre for Remote Sensing Jos. (2021)

Gombe town is well linked by road to other regional centres like Biu/Maidguri, Potiskum, Damaturu, Bauchi/Jos and Yola/Jalingo. A single gauge railway line in the Bauchi-Maiduguri route also links the town, in addition to an international airport and is mainly divided in 11 wards which include Ajiya, Bajoga, Bolari East, Bolari West, Dawaki, Herwagana, Kumbiya-Kumbiya, Pantami, Jekadafari, Nasarawo, and Shamaki. (Abubakar, 2022)

The relief of Gombe developed on complex geologic crystalline bedrock. Although, the ancient crystalline basement complex underlines much of the area, sedimentary formation during the late cretaceous period has influenced the topography. Subsequent dissection and stream incision in the area have carved a landscape consisting of flat topped to conical hills, a granitic residuals and pediment Landscape. The study area has prominent landforms consisting of Liji, and the Gombe hills, which falls within a stretch of the Benue Trough Known as Zambuk ridge. The stratigraphy consists of the alluvium, the Kerri-Keri Formation, Gombe Formation, Pindiga Formation, Yolde Formation, Bima Formation and the basement rocks as the oldest. Alluvium includes most soils and comprises those deposits formed in situ by the chemical and physical decomposition of the bedrocks. The spatial and temporal analysis of Gombe's Urban layout disclosed a centrifugal growth, building desertification and urban layout modification (Balzeret et al. 2003). Reports from the NPC as at 2019 shows that Gombe Metropolis has a population of about 391,869 (NPC, 2020).



## METHODS

A mixed-methods approach was employed to gather comprehensive data on the impact of IDPs on host communities in Gombe Metropolis. Both primary and secondary sources were used. The primary sources of data were acquired via Key Informant Interviews (KII), questionnaire administration and surveys conducted among host community members to assess their perceptions and experiences on the impact of IDPs on the host communities. Data gathered for this research included demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the impact of IDPs on the host communities. The secondary sources of data were derived from previous research work, journals and article publications from the library, internet etc. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select seven out of the eleven wards based on the relatively high number of IDPs found in these wards. The selected wards were, Bolari east, Bolari west, Herwagana, Jekadafari, Nasarawo, Pantami and Shamaki (Table1). The sample size of the study was obtained through the population of the sampled communities from the international organization for migration on the IDP situation in north eastern Nigeria IOM (2016). The total IDP individual population based on International Organisation for Migration 2016 is 10046 persons. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's Table, a population size of between 1200-1299 will have 291 as sample size, hence 291 was adopted as the sample size for the study.

**Table 1: selected wards and the distribution of sample size**

S/N	Gombe LGA Wards	Selected Wards	IDP Households	IDP Individuals	Sample Size
1	Ajiya				
2	Bajoga				
3	Bolari East	Bolari East	142	1180	34
4	Bolari West	BolariWest	121	1055	31
5	Dawaki				
6	Herwagana	Herwagana	130	1117	32
7	Jekadafari	Jekadafari	280	1679	49
8	Kumbiya-Kumbiya				
9	Nasarawa	Nasarawa	138	1083	31
10	Pantami	Pantami	338	2480	72
11	Shamaki	Shamaki	185	1452	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1334</b>	<b>10046</b>	<b>291</b>

**Source: IOM 2016**

### Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques, allowing for a refined understanding of the subject matter. Hence to examine the impact of IDPs to their host communities a four-point Likert scale of very severe=4, severe=3, less severe=2 and not severe=1 was used. The response options with mean value of  $\geq 2.5$  indicate a severe impact of IDPs on the host communities and vice versa.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the diverse impact of IDPs on host communities in Gombe Metropolis (Table 2). The influx of IDPs places additional strain on the host community's resources and infrastructure. The study also reveals positive effects of IDP presence on host communities.

**Table 2: The impact of IDPs on their host communities**

S/N	Impact of IDPs on the host communities	Very Severe (4)	Severe (3)	Less Severe (2)	Not Severe (1)	Total	Mean
1	Increased demand for food.	175	60	45	11	981	3.7
2	Competition for jobs and livelihoods,	173	80	25	15	997	3.4
3	Increased risk of disease outbreaks.	170	69	30	22	969	3.7
4	Pressure on Infrastructure and services.	168	78	26	19	977	3.7
5	Tension and conflicts	162	88	28	13	981	3.7
6	Over exploitation of limited resources and increased waste pollution	159	70	33	29	944	3.2

**Source: fieldwork,2022.**

### Increased demand for food.

From Table 2, internal displacement affects the lives of displaced people, their host communities and those they leave behind in many ways. From Table 2, increased demand for food ranks first and is the most important impact, with a mean of 3.7. IDPs often require assistance to meet their basic needs, which can strain the resources of host communities, most families are forced to restrict their meals from three to one meal per day. Some go for cheaper foods not really putting in mind the nutrition while others adopt several negative coping strategies to manage the little food, they have available. This is in opposite with Justin and Adesoji (2021) who stated that the effect of insurgency driven IDP influx is negative which results in reduced agricultural production due to lower land and labour productivity. It reduces the agricultural wages of both males and females, it increases the reliance on male and female household labour but has no effect on hired labour. The implication of this finding points out that the inflow of IDPs into Gombe has placed stress on households that cater for the them. This has led to negative coping strategies and has significantly increased food insecurity levels as well as created beggars from communities which hitherto were completely independent and, in some cases even considered wealthy in terms of land and livestock ownership. Food and non-food items still remain the highest priority for the IDPs.



### **Competition for jobs and livelihoods.**

Economic hardship exacts a toll on millions of displaced communities. This ranks second on the impact scale with an average mean of 3.4, showing the stress it has on the communities. Income earning opportunities are very difficult, as most of the IDPs have no access to land or cash, nor do they possess alternative skills to earn a decent living, IDPs survive by sharing food and resources with the host and taking advantage of income generating activities in the various host communities. The presence of IDPs has increased competition for jobs and other livelihood opportunities in the host community, potentially exacerbating pre-existing economic disparities. This is in line with Mikulak (2018) who is of the view that when IDPs do not have formal livelihood opportunities and employment rights, they are more likely to become dependent on the few opportunities left thereby giving room for competition of which most times don't get employed.

### **Increased Risk of Disease Outbreaks**

This usually can result from overcrowding living conditions, limited access to clean water, unsanitary living conditions, and also compromised immune systems due to stress and malnutrition. This ranks third (3<sup>rd</sup>) on the impact scale with a total mean of 3.7 showing its severity, lack of sanitation has increased the prevalence of communicable diseases, overcrowding and poor living conditions usually results in an increased risk of disease outbreaks which in turn has negative impacts on both the IDP and host communities. This is consistent with the findings of Owoajetal (2016), who claims that compared to native populations, IDPs are more vulnerable to communicable diseases. There are host, environmental, and health system variables contributing to this increased risk of communicable infections. One major hazard to the host towns is the recurrence of communicable illnesses that the displaced group is dealing with. The findings point out that with IDPs living in close congested quarters there is the prevalence of frequent disease outbreaks than areas that are declustered.

### **Pressure on infrastructure and services**

Displacement disrupts IDPs' and host communities housing conditions this is fourth on the impact severity scale with a mean of 3.7. Relations between host communities and displaced persons are complex, When IDPs first arrive there is often an expression of solidarity and support as friends or family members help them to get settled. But such good will is often short-lived due to the limited resources of the host community. IDPs are often forced to live in substandard collective shelters or informal urban settlements where overcrowding leads to a more degraded standard of living.

The most vulnerable groups identified are women and children, which form the majority of the population of IDPs. This presents a number of challenges associated with informal settlements, and host communities. One of the major findings is the exposure to dangers of sexual harassment and violence and it also points out that host community members have suffered enough in their communities as a result of sharing the little resources with the IDPs.



## **Tension and conflicts**

Tension and conflict are fifth on the scale with an average mean of 3.7 which is also very severe, the arrival of IDPs in large numbers then had created tension within host communities. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre IDMC (2020), the most urgent are threats to physical safety, wellbeing and human rights. The displaced persons are often seen as threats or belonging to a terrorist group, most community members do not want to associate themselves with them. In general, IDPs are often treated with hostility by the general public. They may be viewed with fear, subjected to persecution for being displaced and blamed for increased crime rates. Cultural, regional and ethnic differences often produce conflicts between the two communities and become excuses for racism and discrimination in daily life, such as in the workplace and in the landlord-tenant relationship. Furthermore, host communities often do not understand the state assistance programs for IDPs. This can lead to hostility toward IDPs and unsubstantiated accusations regarding IDPs' supposed inability to use state assistance effectively, organize themselves or overcome their present situation. This is in contrast with a publication made by OCHA (2015) who was of the view that when displaced people share a common language and culture with the host communities, this promotes peaceful reception. The findings shows that when the host and IDPs has different beliefs and ethnicity there is bound to be a form of conflict.

The most often cited environmental impact of mass displacement is loss of forest coverage. Trees are felled to make way for shelters and other infrastructure, for construction timber and for use as fuel for cooking, heating and lighting. Over population on host communities has already placed pressure on the little resources the host communities have, the more the people the more the exploitation. The overexploitation of water resources is also a significant issue, places like Libya and Gabukka are completely out of water, they are reliant on neighbouring areas like GRA and GSADP for water supply. This in line with Badeson and Chatharal (2020) who asserts that most displaced persons are seen as security threats and deplete most of the limited resources available in the host communities they find themselves in. Population increase clearly mean more waste, IDP host settlements rarely have adequate waste management systems thereby leading to an improper waste disposal.

It also of importance to note that there are some ways of which the IDPs have made positive impacts to their host communities this is through:

### **Economic Contribution:**

IDPs can bolster local economies by creating additional demand for goods and services, leading to increased economic activity. They can also contribute to the labour force, filling in gaps, most IDPs residing in Libya come into Old GRA get employed as domestic aids and guards as a means of sustenance for themselves.

### **Innovation and Skill Transfer:**

IDPs may bring with them unique skills, knowledge, and expertise that can be shared with the host community. Most of the displaced persons coming from Maiduguri and Yobe are experts in weaving Zannah caps (Caps worn by the northern Nigerian man) so a lot of the people in this town have learnt how to sow these caps there by leading to and exchange in skill which is line with Nankani (2015) who states That the coming of IDPs into a community may bring an exchange to innovative practices and improved local capacity.



### **Cultural Exchange:**

Interaction between IDPs and host communities can foster cultural exchange, leading to a greater understanding and appreciation of each other's traditions, languages, and practices.

### **Social Solidarity:**

Hosting IDPs can bring communities together as they work collectively to address the needs of those displaced. This can strengthen social ties and promote a sense of unity and support among community members.

### **Strengthened Social Fabric:**

Hosting IDPs can provide an opportunity for host communities to demonstrate compassion and empathy, fostering a sense of goodwill and camaraderie among community members.

However the integration of IDPs can foster social cohesion and cultural exchange, promoting understanding and tolerance among community members. Economic opportunities may emerge as IDPs engage in entrepreneurial activities, stimulating local markets and job creation. Furthermore, the sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences between IDPs and host communities can enhance community development and resilience.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study sheds light on the impact of IDPs on host communities in Gombe town, demonstrating the complex dynamics and multiple dimensions involved. By understanding both the positive and negative effects, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can develop targeted interventions to address the challenges faced by host communities and capitalize on the potential benefits of IDP integration. This research contributes to the broader knowledge on forced migration and community development, providing insights that can inform evidence-based decision-making and humanitarian response in similar contexts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the research, the following are suggested:

- i. To address the heightened demand for food resulting from the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs), urgent measures should be taken to boost agricultural production and distribution channels in affected areas.
- ii. Economic support and capacity-building programs targeted at both IDPs and host community members can promote sustainable livelihoods and economic growth.
- iii. To mitigate the heightened risk of disease outbreaks exacerbated by the presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gombe Town, immediate action is crucial. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, implementing robust sanitation measures, and conducting targeted vaccination campaigns can help contain and prevent the spread of infectious diseases within both the IDP and host communities.
- iv. To alleviate the strain on infrastructure and services caused by the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gombe Town, comprehensive planning and resource allocation are imperative. Investing in infrastructure upgrades, expanding service delivery capacities, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders can help meet the growing needs of both IDPs and host communities effectively.
- v. Promoting communication and community involvement is crucial to reducing tensions and potential confrontations brought on by the inflow of internally displaced people (IDPs) in





Gombe Town. IDPs and host communities may live in peace and harmony by putting conflict resolution procedures into place, encouraging social cohesion programs, and resolving complaints..

- vi. To enhance the relationship between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities, it is essential to enhance the engagement of international and non-governmental organizations. This can be achieved through initiatives that facilitate meaningful interactions between host communities and IDPs. The Nigerian government, specifically agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and State Emergency agencies, should take concrete steps to improve this collaboration.

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