

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Guma local government area of Benue state and their information needs

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Abstract

Recently, 1st of January, 2018 to be precise, communities in Guma local government area of Benue state, Nigeria were attacked by suspected Fulani herdsmen thereby forcing them to abandon their ancestral homes and livelihoods. The displaced lost their social, legal and economic ties and thus suffered considerable physical and psychological hardships. Attempts were being made by the combined assistance of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the state government and spirited individuals to address their food, shelter and water needs however, it was not certain if the information needs which, is measured as the fifth of the human needs in ranking with air, water, food and shelter has been identified and addressed. The crux of the study therefore, is to ascertain the information needs of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Guma local government area of Benue state and how to meet the needs. One thousand (1000) displaced persons from seven IDPs camps were randomly selected for the study. Descriptive and evaluative survey research designs were adopted for the study while oral interview was used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analysed using statistical descriptive tools such as tables, simple frequencies and percentages. The findings from the study revealed that the IDPs' greatest information needs among other things included information needs on: water supply, food supply, healthcare, the where about of their loved ones, when to go back home to reintegrate with their families and the Governments' efforts to end the crisis. The study further revealed that majority of the IDPs are illiterates and their major sources of information are basically the churches and Public gatherings. In addition, the paper attempted to offer measures on how to meet their information needs.

Keywords: Information, Information needs, Internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Introduction

In the past two months, an alarming number of people from Guma local government of Benue state have had to abandon their homes and livelihoods in the face of Fulani Herdsmen terroristic attacks amidst other threats. As they do not cross an international border, they are considered 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs) and not refugees. Figures and statistics of IDPs revealed by NEMA Benue state (2018) showed that the number of IDPs has risen steadily since the early January, 2018 attacks and people are now displaced and camped in seven different camps across Benue and Nasarawa states. An accepted estimate is that 170,000 people were internally displaced due to the suspected Fulani herdsmen attacks. The displaced lose their social, legal and economic ties and thus suffer considerable physical and psychological hardships. They often face special difficulties not shared with other attack-affected groups that make their livelihoods insecure. Specifically, there are difficulties related to re-establishing livelihoods in areas of temporary settlement or reintegration in unstable areas when traditional means of livelihoods are no longer viable. The forced displacement of the people remains one of the most pressing humanitarian problems Benue state government has to contend with. Therefore, Benue State has been battling helplessly with insurgency perpetrated by the suspected Fulani Herdsmen attacks. The food, shelter and protection and other requirements of IDPs should be guaranteed by the government, but in a state divided by herdsmen terrorists' attacks, or where

the government has very limited resources, that assistance may be inadequate. This is particularly true when the state's economic and social infrastructure has been destroyed and its displaced citizens cannot return home to resume livelihood activities for long periods. Governments, NEMA and spirited individuals have become more responsive in acknowledging their primary responsibility for protecting and assisting the affected populations in the provision of water, food and shelter within their meager resources. However, it is not certain if the information needs of the IDPs, which according to Kemp(1976) is measured as the fifth of the human needs in ranking with air, water, food and shelter has been identified and met. Against this backdrop, the paper investigates the information needs of the Fulani attacks- ridden communities in Guma local government area with the view to address them adequately.

Information is a raw material for the development of both urban and rural communities. Socio-economic and political development of any nation depend largely on its facility to recognize when information is needed and ability to acquire, access, disseminate and effectively use the needed information. A study by Butta (2009) on rural dwellers indicates that access to information is a vital key in maintaining active and independent lives among the rural dwellers/ internally displaced persons (IDPs). Access to information is critical because it creates awareness for the people to become conscious of their social entitlements such as the provision of basic human needs like water, food and

shelter and other social amenities and available sources of support to overcome their social exclusion. There are no human conditions where information is not a key component. Even in the IDPs' present precarious conditions, information is needed. Indeed, their information needs are very crucial in the effectiveness of the government performance to address their immediate social amenities. The success of the governments in meeting the IDPs' human needs depend largely upon the availability of information on the human needs of the displaced persons. Their information needs must first be established and identified, it is only then the efforts of various spirited individuals, governments and NEMA toward meeting these human needs will yield positive results. Hence, the need for this paper to investigate the information needs of the IDPs in Guma local government.

Statement of Problem: The activity of the much dreaded Fulani Herdsmen has tampered with the peace and harmony of Benue as a state and Guma local government area in particular. The victims of attacks were not just those who died during the attacks, but those who live to tell the story live with pains and memories that may never make them remain the same again. Above and beyond, the displaced persons at the camps have seen a lighter shade of death with the hardship and sufferings they have endured in recent times. Some of them are lost and have no suspicion of the whereabouts of their loved ones. Living in the IDP camp is enough reason for them to be unhappy and upset when they used to be major business owners and land owners. This study, however, intends to find out the information needs of the IDPs at the seventh IDP camps in Benue State

Concept of Information Needs: The term information needs according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia are an individual or group's desires to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. The 'information' and 'need' in 'information need' are an inseparable interconnection. Needs and interests call for information. Information needs are related but, distinct from information requirement. Similarly, information needs or (need for information) according to Prasada (2000) is a situation where there exists an inseparable inter connection between 'information' and 'need'. Information originates and generated because there exists a need or interest. The content of information is of primary concern. This concept further explains that information objectivity necessary for realizing a function is the objective information. Such information needs of the users have to be satisfied. It may be emphasized that information need is an objective need. In other words, they are orientated towards reality practice and task. Need is want of something which one cannot well do without. The literature reflects the critical lack of exclusivity. Looking at the different aspect of need, it can be said that information need is a condition in which certain

information contributes to the achievement of a genuine purpose. Information is a relationship which obtains between information and information purpose. According to Oshiname (2009) as cited by Kemasuode (2012) information need is the recognition of the existence of uncertainty in decision making. Information needs according to this concept also refers to the extent to which information is required to solve problems, as well as the degree of expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the information

Theoretical Framework: Model of information seeking theory was propounded by Wilson and Kricklas in 1997. This model of information seeking theory illustrates the relationship between the concepts of user, needs, uses and user behaviour. The model suggests that the users perceives a need in the context of the users environment or even the user will perceive an information need. The perceived need will lead the user to search for information, making demands upon a variety of information sources. Information seeking may either be successful or unsuccessful. If successful, information would be located and will be used. This may result in the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of the original perceived need. Satisfaction occurs when the located information has been analyzed and satisfies the original needs. With non-satisfaction, the information seeking process may be repeated until satisfaction occurs. Failure to find information may result in the process of information seeking being continued. The information seeking process ends when perceived needs has been satisfied. The above model of information seeking attempts to describe and gives more understanding of the process the rural farmers follow to satisfy their information needs and therefore, the theory is very relevant to this current study.

Purpose of the Study: The primary purpose of the study is to ascertain the information needs of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Guma local government area of Benue state.

Research Question

1. What is your educational level?
2. What types of farming are you into?
3. What are your information needs?
4. What are the sources of your information?
5. What are problems militating against getting your information needs?

What are the ways by which your information needs can be met?

Significance: The findings of this study will be of great benefits to the internally displaced persons (IDPs)/rural farmers, Benue state government, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Federal Government and the Libraries/ Librarians. The study will be of immense benefit to the IDPs/ rural farmers as the study will help identify their various information needs which if adequately satisfied will in turn alleviate their hardships in their various IDPs camps. The study will

also be beneficial to the Benue state government, the Federal Government and NEMA who are the stakeholders in the management of IDPs welfare, as the study will reveal and create awareness on the information needs of the rural farmers forcibly displaced with the view to satisfy those needs. The major purpose of every library/Librarian is to provide resources to meet the information needs of its users. Therefore, the outcome of this study will further enable them to carry out their traditional responsibility of providing resources that will adequately meet the information needs of the rural farmers/IDPs.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive Survey research design which aims at investigating the information needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Guma Local Government of Benue State, who were forcibly

displaced by the suspected Fulani herdsmen. One thousand (1000) IDPs from seven IDPs camps across Benue and Nasarawa states were randomly sampled from the population for the study. The instrument for the study was interview which allowed for options due to close ended nature of the questions. The instrument was presented in two scale rating: Yes(Y) and No (N). Correspondingly, each of the options attracted the following: Yes(Y-4) and No (N-1). The response rate of 50 and above was considered acceptable while response rate of 49 and below was considered unacceptable.

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical tool such as tables, frequencies and percentages.

Research Question 1: What is your educational qualification?

Table 1: Response on the educational qualification of the displaced persons

S. No.	Options	Response Rate	Percentage Rate (%)
1	No Educational qualification	320	32
1	First school leaving Certificate (FSLC)	270	27
2	West Africa school Certificate (WASC)	200	20
3	Nigerian certificate in Education(NCE)	125	12.5
4	Degree certificate	85	8.5
Total		1000	100

The table above revealed that 320(32%) respondents had no educational qualification, 270(27%) respondents had first school leaving certificates and 200(20%) respondents had West African school certificates. While 125(12.5%) respondents had

Nigerian certificate of education, only 85(8.5%) respondents had degree certificates.

Research Question Two: What type of farming do you practice?

Table 2: Responses on the type of farming the displaced persons practice.

S.No.	Options	Response Rate	Percentage Rate (%)
1	Crop Farming	350	35
2	Poultry farming	150	15
3	Fish farming	100	10
4	Animal farming	160	16
5	Mixed farming	240	24
Total		1000	100

From the findings on table two, it is evident that 350 (35%) respondents practice crop farming, 150 (15%) respondents practice poultry farming and 100 (10%) respondents practice fish farming. while 160 (16%) respondents practice animal farming and 240 (24%) respondents practice mixed farming.

Research Question three: What are your information needs?

Table 3: Responses on the information needs of the displaced persons

S. No.	Options	Response rate	Percentage rate (%)
1	Information on water supply	240	24
2	Information on how to acquire food supply	230	23

3	Information on how to get basic medical care	150	15
4	Information about the where about of relations they have left	250	25
5	Information on when to go back home to re-integrate with their family members.	180	18
6	Information on the governments' efforts to end the attack on them	50	5
Total		1000	100

Table 4 sought to find out the information needs of the rural farmers/IDPs. The findings revealed that 240(24%) respondents needed information on the acquisition and supply of water 230(23%) respondents needed information on how to acquire food 150(15%) respondents needed information on medical care. While 250(25%) respondents needed information on the where

about of their relations, another 180(18%) respondents required information on when to re-integrate with their family members and 50(5%) respondents wanted information on the governments' efforts to stop the attack on them.

Research Question four: What are the sources of your information?

Table 4: Responses on the sources of information by which the displaced persons get their information

S. No.	Options	Response Rate	Percentage Rate (%)
1	Phones	180	18
2	Church/public gatherings	620	62
3	Radio	160	16
4	Television	5	0.5
5	Newspapers	35	3.5
Total		1000	100

Table three above revealed that 180(18%) respondents got their source of information through the phone, 620(62%) respondents got their source from church and 160(16%) respondents had their source of information from the radio. While only 5(0.5%)

respondents had their source of information from the television, 35(3.5%) got their source of information from the newspapers

Research Question five: What are the problems militating against getting your information needs?

Table 5: Responses on the problems hampering their information needs

S. No	Options	Response Rate	Percentage Rate (%)
1	Lack of access to radio	280	28
2	Lack of access to Television	200	20
3	Lack of access to library	75	7.5
4	Lack of access to newspapers	100	10
5	Lack of access to markets	345	34.5
Total		1000	100

From table four above it is evident that 280(28%) respondents opined that lack of access to radio was one of the major challenges against their getting their information needs and 200 (20%) respondents complained lack of access to television. While 75

(7.5%) and 100 (10%) respondents nagged at lack of library and lack of newspaper respectively, 345 (34.5%) respondents queried on the absence of markets.

Research question six: What are the possible ways of meeting your information needs?

Table 6: Responses on the possible ways of meeting their information needs

S. No.	Options	Response rate	Percentage rate (%)
1	Provision of portable water	300	30
2	Supply of sufficient food	380	38
3	Provision of basic health care	220	22
4	Establishment of temporary radio stations	55	5.5
5	Supply of newspapers	45	4.5
Total		1000	100

The above table highlights several suggestions put forward by the IDPs on how to meet their information needs as follows: 300(30%) respondents suggested the provision of source of water such as bore holes and wells as one way of meeting their information needs, another 380(38%) respondents opted for the supply of sufficient food as one of the ways to ease their information needs. However, 220(22%) respondents suggested the provision of basic medical care, while 55(5.5%) respondents needed establishment of temporary radio stations as one way of meeting their information needs 45(4.5%) respondents suggested regular supply of newspapers as one of the ways to satisfy their information.

Discussion

The result of the findings on research question one which seeks to find out the educational levels of the IDPs was very enlightening. The result shows that majority of the IDPs in Guma LGA are illiterates. Only a handful population of the IDPs is educated to primary and secondary school levels and their pre-occupation is farming. Their lack of literacy suggests why they are predominantly farmers and why the attack would certainly have serious implications on their agricultural productivity and entire economic lives. The high rate of illiteracy among the farmers is not peculiar to IDPs/rural farmers in Guma. In a study by Momoh (2002) on information needs and seeking behavior of rural dwellers in Nigeria cited in Omale (2012), the finding concurs that the major predicament of rural dwellers is lack of literacy. Also in a study conducted by Atanda (2000) on the information needs of IDPs camps in Borno state revealed in consonance with the finding of this study that 74% of IDPs population was illiterate.

On the types of farming the IDPs/ rural farmers are involved in research question two, the finding reveals that the IDPs practice different types of farming ranging from: crop farming, fish farming, poultry farming, animal farming and mixed farming. However, majority of them in Guma practice crop farming and a few percentage of the population indulged in mixed farming. One may be right to assume that the people mostly carry out crop farming because they are sustenance farmers; they produce to feed their families. In addition, crop farming does not require much capital. This line of argument agrees with the outcome of the study conducted by Kemasuode (2012) on information needs of rural dwellers in selected communities in Oju local government area, in which the result of the findings revealed that the rural dwellers were predominantly farmers who majorly practice crop farming. This is why it was not surprising to discover that the attack had adverse effect mostly on their crops.

On the question relating to the information needs of the rural farmers, the result shows that they have varied information needs ranging from information on:

water supply, food supply, medical care, where about of relations, when to go back home and governments' efforts to end the crisis. They expressed concern on these areas of their information needs as lack of information were hampering their ability to get the needed basic human needs such as water, food and medication. During the interview, some of the respondents confided on the researcher to request that they particularly needed information on how to get water supply as this essential human need was absolutely lacking. They expressed their frustrations and desperations in comments such as "how would they survive without water to drink, cook and bathe?" The information need on getting source of water was so bitterly expressed by almost every IDP because of complete absence of source of water like bore holes and wells. They also needed information on food supply and complained bitterly on lack of adequate food supply. Considering donations of food from NEMA, state governments and spirited individuals, it is incredible that food should be lacking in any of the IDPs camps. There is a strong feeling of suspicion that the monetary and food donations never get to IDPs. Collaborating with this stand point, Olagunju (2006) found out that aid such as money/ relief gets diverted and never gets to IDPs. In addition, the IDPs need information on where they can get medical care as there were or near absence of regular medical care. This finding is in line with human rights (1998) which affirmed that IDPs, especially children suffer medical care as they do not receive any social security such as vaccination and immunization coverage. The information need on the where about of their relations whom they have left is paramount among the information needs of the internally displaced persons. One would expect this kind of feeling to be prevalent among their information needs because of the absence of their loved ones. The require information to know if their close relations whom they left are alive or dead. This strong feeling for their loved ones is also what triggered their nostalgia and information need on when to go back home to re-integrate with their family members whom they have left for couple of months. As such they need information on what efforts the governments are making to end the crisis permanently. The efforts of the government to end the ever going attack will mean nothing to them until they go back home to re-unite with the members of their families whom they have left for a period of time. The above information needs expressed by the IDPs in Guma local government area of Benue state are in conformity with the outcome of the study conducted by Atanda (2009) on the information needs and seeking behavior of IDPs in Borno state which confirmed that IDPs are facing a number of information challenges on water, food, shelter, medical care, where about of relations and when they will finally go back to integrate with their family members.

The outcome of the findings on research question four reveals that the IDPs have several sources of information such as: churches/public gatherings, radio, television and newspapers. The study however further reveals that their main sources of information are churches and public gatherings. This is revealing by the high response rate of sixty-two percent against the total response rate of thirty-eight percent for other sources of information namely: phones, radio, television and newspapers. This will not be unconnected with their illiteracy level. Since majority of them cannot read and write, they depend solely on sources of information from the churches and public gatherings where information they need are communicated to them in their own native language. Most of them do not own phones, radios, televisions because they cannot afford them, neither do they have access to regular newspaper supply. This is suggestive why the response rate of those who get their sources of information through radio, television and newspapers are very negligible. Their reliance on the above sources of information is not strange because a study by Omale (2012) on information needs of rural farmers in Apa local government area of Benue state confirms that the main sources of information of the farmers in Apa are churches/ rallies and public functions.

Meeting the information needs of the IDPs is very critical because information which is measured the fifth of human needs in ranking with air, water, food and shelter is crucial to their survival in their new but temporary locations. In addition meeting information needs of the people will make the people to become conscious of their social entitlements such as the provision of basic human needs like water, food and shelter and other social amenities and available sources of support to overcome their social exclusion. The suggestions, according to the findings which range from providing information on: provision of portable water, supply of sufficient food, provision of basic healthcare, establishment of temporary radio stations and supply of newspapers are conceived by farmers to be the most cogent ways of meeting their information needs and should be viewed with all seriousness. These suggestions conform to Atanda (2009) that IDPs on safe arrival at their new but temporary locations deserve basic information on portable water, food supply, healthcare, shelter, security and education which must be met in order to stay alive and inhibit social –cultural and security consequences. Also in a study by Momoh (2002) on information needs and seeking behavior of rural dwellers in Nigeria, the result of the finding reveals the rural dwellers among other things, needs to be provided with information on: good source of water, adequate food supply, medical care and other social amenities that makes life comfortable and secure. Thus, the suggestions put forward as means of meeting their information needs are reliable to be considered by this study appropriate.

Recommendation

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Considering the fact that the majority of the IDPs are illiterate, the government should establish temporary primary and secondary schools in various camps for their children to attend. This is very expedient considering the fact that most of these children were in school before they were forced to abandon their education due to the attack on their communities. Also, an adult education centre should be organized for the adults where they can learn how to read and write.
2. The governments should make frantic effort to ensure adequate provision of water, food and basic healthcare to enhance the living conditions of the IDPs. One way of doing this is by digging bore hole in each of the camps and ensuring that the food items/monies donated towards assuaging food scarcity is properly managed and not diverted for other purposes. In addition, it is not too much for the governments to establish temporary hospitals in each camp to provide at least basic health care for the people. This is crucial because the findings of the study have revealed that there is inadequate supply or scarcity of these necessities of life which will obviously make their lives comfortable and secure in their new but temporary locations.
3. Governments and NEMA should become more responsive in acknowledging their primary responsibility for protecting and assisting the affected populations in the provision of water, food, healthcare and shelter and ensure that food, money and medical gifts received are not being diverted by their staff.
4. Governments at all levels should take appropriate action on resolving the insurgency issue particularly, the Fulani herdsmen attacks with the view to bring lasting solutions to allow the IDPs return to their ancestral homes to reintegrate with their family members rather than allowing them continue to live in a new but temporary location with their attendant hardships.

Conclusion

The study investigates the information needs of the internally displaced persons and concludes that there is an urgent need for the government to develop the information consciousness of the IDPs by providing effective and reliable information delivery machineries. There is also the need for governments to intensify adequate effort in the provision of the basic human necessities like water, food and healthcare to enhance the living condition of people who are already psychologically and emotionally discomfort. The above is necessary if we are to ensure the security, comfort and survival of the IDPs who are by all-purpose

innocent victims of unwarranted circumstance and lack of effective administrative foresight.

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