



Displacement Status and Welfare of Settlers in Population Resettlements: The case of Bakassi Resettlement Programme in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: This paper examines displacement status and welfare of Bakassi settlers in Cross River State against the backdrop of the 1980 UN policy on resettlement programmes and its implications for resettlement planning as well as success of a resettlement scheme. The study is predicated on the apriori that the state of Bakassi settlers is akin to status depreciation, impoverishment, loss of sources of livelihood, stigmatization, discrimination, inhuman treatment and infringement of fundamental human rights. The issues discussed have wider applicability for resettlement programmes not only in Nigeria but in Africa as a whole. In the light of these observations, it is suggested among others that vigorous education campaigns should be carried out among settlers and neighbouring communities around the resettlement area. The campaigns should emphasize attitudinal change, accommodation, cooperation, peace and unity amongst the settlers and the neighbouring communities. Efforts should also be made through workshops, seminars, and conferences to bring about this awareness. The study also suggests that government should take a strategic sustainable development approach to address the challenges confronting displaced persons, including economic empowerment, provision of employment opportunities, infrastructural development and ensure functional participation of settlers in the decision making framework, planning and operations of the resettlement.

Key Words: displacement, resettlements, settlers, status, welfare.

1. Introduction

One of the most fundamental and contentious issues that has attracted global attention in the last decade has been the forceful displacement of people from their ancestral homes and subsequent resettlement. It has become a global concern, especially among scholars, the United Nations (UN), the government, geographers

and demographers alike due to its spread and negative consequences - poverty and misery, inhuman treatment, landlessness, destitution, debasement, and abuse of fundamental human rights of displaced persons, etc. In other words, the incidence of population displacement has reached an alarming proportion. For example,

China had more than 10 million people resettled over a period of 40 years due to dam construction alone, and about 14 million people displaced due to urban projects and over 7 million by transportation projects. This number is fully half of the world's total (World Bank, 2003).

The aggregate number of people displaced in India within four decades was about 2.5 million people. These included displacements from reservoirs, urban sites, thermal plants and mines (Fernandes, Das, and Rao 2000). The Almatti dam and the Narayanpur dam had displaced 220,000 people and the Narmada Sardar dam with its network of downstream irrigation canals and roads had displaced over 250,000 people of which about 127,000 in the reservoir and about 125,000 in the downstream area were resettled (Fernandes, Das, and Rao 2000). Dieci and Viezzoli (2002) assert that in Latin America, countries like Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay carried out gigantic projects that deprived millions of people of their homes and lands. For instance, the Itaipu, Sobradinho, Lingu and others in Brazil, the Chixoy in Guatemala experienced series of displacements as a result of various kinds of developmental projects embarked upon on large scales. In Indonesia, the Cirata and the Saguling dam projects displaced over 56,000 and 60,000 people respectively. In Africa, more than 35 million refugees lost their homes and

settled elsewhere due to political, social or natural factors. Out of this figure 15 million were classified as international refugees while 20 million were internal refugees (Chukuma, 2009).

Other classic cases that have also yielded a vast body of writings and case monographs as well as comparative studies were the Kossoo dam project in Cote D'voire which displaced about 85, 000 people, the Roseires dam project in Sudan displacing about 19,000 people, the Kariba dam construction in Zambia/Zimbabwe with about 57,000 persons displaced, Cabora Bassa dam project in Mozambique displacing 25,000 people among others. (Cernea, 1997). In Nigeria, several population resettlement programmes were carried out. Barbour (2006) reported in his study that population resettlements were pervasive in Nigeria since the second world wars. Luning (2008) equally stated that the Nigerian governments had always resorted to resettlement programmes whenever it wanted to embark on development projects. For example, a total of 5,700 persons were displaced and relocated by Oyo State government for purposes of urban development and urban renewal. Oni (2003) reported that in 1970 about 3,300 people were displaced and relocated by the Lagos State government due to a multi-state water project and about 300 persons were displaced due to drainage and sanitation projects.

When viewed against the backdrop of the UN policy on population resettlement programmes, which favoured development oriented population schemes and the preservation of the identity, culture, values, and ethos of a displaced people, the spate of population resettlement schemes in Africa tends to be different. In other words, the United Nation's policy initiatives put in place to run resettlement programmes in Africa fail to achieve the desired result as resettlement operations in Africa are characterized by a great deal of controversy, high level protest and negative social reactions from the displaced persons and other sectors of the society (Bathomine, 2009). According to Cernea (1997) the United Nations Organization (UNO) policy on resettlement programmes formulated in 1980 explicitly favours development oriented population schemes and emphasizes the need for countries to minimize displacements in any way possible. It spelt out in clear terms the need to preserve the identity, culture, values, and ethos of a displaced people, restore the income of displaced persons as it was in the pre-displaced level, protect the livelihood of displaced people and ensure that the people cope in their new homes and their living standard improved (Cernea, 1997). Consequent upon this, the United Nations through the World Bank had always injected huge sums of money into resettlement programmes as a way of scaling up

the operations and catering for the welfare of settlers. In spite of this, resettlement programmes in Africa have failed and Adeprtu (2006) attributed the failure to administrative, economic and technical inadequacies.

Some core questions often raised concern the future and security of displaced people, the role of government and the international community in the resettlement plans especially in the aspects of development and benefits of resettlement operations (Cernea, 1997). In most resettlement schemes undertaken by government, especially in Africa, the settlers were excluded from functional participation in the system which made them feel a deep sense of neglect, abandonment or alienation. Whenever people were forced to abandon their homes, they would first be treated as refugees and deprived of normal livelihood; and more often than not pushed to the limits of poverty and starvation (Bathomine, 2009).

Indeed, the concept of displacement to most persons is akin to suffering, pain, status depreciation or something that is discrediting; and reduces the worth and dignity of displaced persons (Amu, 2011; Bathomine, 2009). In most resettlement programmes, displaced persons were disenfranchised and sometimes treated like refugees, reduced to inferior status, stigmatized, discriminated and susceptible to undue prejudice,

negative attitudes, abuse and maltreatment (Fredga, 2001). This erosion of rights can cause some psychological damage as well as negatively affect the success of the resettlement programme.

The ill treatment of displaced persons exists in almost all resettlement operations worldwide, although these may manifest differently across countries or societies (Foss and Bonn, 2009). Displacement not only makes it more difficult for the displaced persons to recover all they have lost, but it also interferes with their attempts to cope with the future. Displacements associated with natural disasters (in which case government is not responsible) sometimes deter governments from taking fast, effective action towards resettling the victims and catering for their welfare (Yering and Malcolm, 2008). Displaced persons more often than not suffer from disenfranchisement and loss of property (e.g. in relation to stolen property and arson).

The problem of funds has always undermined the ability of government to protect, provide support and care for displaced persons. This significantly hinders efforts at stemming the difficulty often faced by the settlers. Beside, displaced persons find it difficult to cope with or adapt easily to changes in their new environment. This undermines the ability of the displaced ones to lead a fruitful and meaningful existence. Examples of degrading experiences of

displacement measures include restrictions of rights, prohibitions, isolations, discriminations, stigma, limitations, etc. In most cases, the condition under which people were displaced fails to anchor in human right approach which protects their fundamental human rights and pays due respect to ethical principles. Bassel (2009) assert that displacements, especially involuntary displacement infringes upon internationally guaranteed human rights, especially the right to own property. That is, the way in which compulsory evacuation of people from their homes is typically carried out, amounts to disregards for basic human rights of individuals' integrity, privacy, and information.

In some cases, society's concern for the displaced persons usually is that of mixed feelings: pity, hatred, awe and display of varying degrees of passion (Brenda, 2011). For example, from African cultural perspective, ancestral homes are depicted as places of worship, a sacred and revered place where the living and the dead exist and interact, where ancestral spirits live to guide, protect and support the living (Charles, 2008, Amu, 2011 and Butung, 2012). Thus, displacing persons from their ancestral homes means alienating them from their traditional, cultural, physical and of course, economic base. It also has the dire consequence of a floated destiny (Ozuliman, 2008). On the whole, the degrading and inhuman treatment and challenges faced by

the displaced ones to be specific continue to soar high and to be a burden on the victims and the society in general.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

The risk and reconstruction model was formulated by Cernea in 1996. The model tries to highlight the processes through which impoverishment occurs in any resettlement processes and the guide for problem resolution. The model is a prescription for action to overcome the problems associated with resettlement operations. It assumed that impoverishment is a fundamental feature of resettlements and is usually caused by landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, loss of access to common property/resources, increased morbidity and mortality, and community disarticulation (Cernea, 1996). It further assumed that the solution to these problems lies in the reconstructive strategies which must be based on land-based resettlement, creation of employment opportunities, house reconstruction programmes, health care and nutrition, safe guards and community rebuilding (Cernea, 1996).

The model captured what happens in resettlement operations that fail and grimly warns about the likely risks and pitfalls that must be either avoided or mitigated and reversed through reconstruction livelihoods. Thus, this conceptual model is seen by scholars as both a synthesis of past adverse experiences and more

importantly a productive and planning tool for improving resettlements. The model therefore serves as a framework for strategizing on the best means to improve the living standards of displaced people. In other words, the model describes and explains critical and social processes that increase the probabilities and possibilities of settlers' wellbeing and their optimal functioning.

There is clear indication that the problems highlighted in the model are being experienced in the Bakassi resettlement. Indeed, the condition of settlers could aptly be described as hopeless as some of them were homeless, landless, jobless and impoverished, etc. When the Bakassi indigenes moved out of their ancestral homes at the peninsula, they were first kept in make-shift camps in Abana and Ekprikang as refugees before they were moved to their permanent site. Their condition was indeed a deplorable one. The model was also found to be relevant in terms of its strategies towards improving the welfare of the settlers and making the Bakassi resettlement programme effective. It implies that there should be conscious effort at making constructive changes that will enhance and improve the condition of displaced people. This could be done by consciously utilizing their potentials.

Furthermore, the model is relevant in the sense that the settlers' involvement in self-help development would bring about

transformation in their lives. The model is also grounded in the assumption that settlers would make meaningful commitment and undertake effective goal oriented activities when they have the liberty to exploit the resources within their new environment. It goes to suggest that if the Bakassi settlers have the liberty, are empowered and treated with dignity and respect, they would be able to make a meaningful existence.

2. Methods and Materials

The research adopted a descriptive survey design, utilizing both cross-sectional and correlation survey analysis, carried out on a randomly selected sample. The cross-sectional survey was adopted because the population under investigation was a predetermined population. Beside, it allowed for the collection of primary data using both quantitative and qualitative instruments such as questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

The correlation design enabled the researcher to explore the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the study. The survey design was preferred for this study because it made it possible for the researcher to draw inferences from a sampled population and then make a generalization of the findings. The study population comprises the entire Bakassi Indigenes who resettled at Akwa-obutong in the new Bakassi Local Government Area. These included males and females, adult, teenagers

and children. They were estimated to be 18,000 (Agande, Ochayi, Chris and Nyong, 2008). Out of this total population, household heads (upon which the respondents of the study were drawn) constitute six thousand and four (6004) (Bakassi Resettlement Commission, 2009). It was from this number of household heads that a total sample of six hundred (600) respondents representing 10 per cent of household heads was selected for the study.

This sample was selected through stratified and systematic random sampling techniques. First, the resettlement camp was divided into three strata according to the existing resettlement units. To select the sample of respondents from the three resettlement units (strata) the systematic random sampling method was adopted. The researcher went through a register of each resettlement unit containing the names of household heads. From each of the registers, every tenth (10th) name was picked and the individual household head was then located and interviewed. University students were used as research assistants to facilitate the interpretation and smooth interaction and were properly instructed. The generated data from the questionnaire items were appropriately coded,/scored, collated and then extracted and arranged in Means, Standard deviations and Percentages. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was

adopted to analyze the data generated. The sample-by-sample distribution of respondents by their strata and selection is shown on Table 1.

TABLE 1: Sample-by-sample distribution of respondents by their strata and selection

Strata	Number of households	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Archibong town	2632	263	43.8
Abana town	1810	180	30.0
Atabong town	1575	157	26.2
Total	6017	600	100

3. Result

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their opinion about displacement status of settlers and welfare of Bakassi indigenes in Cross River State.

S/n	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	A
1	Bakassi settlers are spited by their neighbours	280 (46.7%)	160 (26.7%)	95 (15.8%)	65 (10.8%)
2.	Bakassi settlers have lost their worth and dignity by their displacement	311 (51.8%)	191 (31.8%)	76 (12.7%)	22 (3.7%)
3.	Break up of the Bakassi indigenous population has dehumanizing effect on the settlers.	285 (47.5%)	221 (36.3%)	85 (14.2%)	9 (1.5%)
4.	Displacement has infringed upon the fundamental human rights of the settlers.	314 (52.3%)	99 (16.5%)	105 (17.5%)	82 (13.7%)
5.	Bakassi people are impoverished by their displacement	319 (53.2%)	209 (34.8%)	11 (1.8%)	61 (10.2%)
6.	Neighbouring communities see Bakassi settlers as inferior	365 (60.8%)	109 (18.2%)	28 (4.7%)	98 (16.3%)
7.	Bakassi settlers are perceived by government officials as ingrates	275 (45.8%)	88 (14.7%)	117 (19.5%)	120 (20%)
8.	Bakassi settlers have accepted their displacement status in good faith	301 (50.2%)	167 (27.8%)	72 (12%)	60 (10%)
9.	Bakassi settlers do not have the innovative spirit to succeed in the resettlement	11 (1.8%)	8 (1.3%)	289 (48.2%)	292 (48.7%)
10.	Condition of Bakassi settlers can be likened to status depreciation	249 (41.5%)	214 (35.7%)	63 (10.5%)	74 (12.3%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014.

Table 2 shows the analysis of respondents' responses in regards to the displacement status of settlers and the welfare of Bakassi indigenes. The analysis of responses to item 1 which states: "The Bakassi people are spited by their neighbours" shows that 280 or 46.67 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 160 or 26.67 per cent agreed, 95 or 15.83 per cent strongly disagreed, while 65 or 10.83 per cent disagreed. The response pattern reveals the disdain the Bakassi settlers experience in the hands of their neighbours, a situation

that breeds hatred, constant confrontations and rivalry between them and the host communities. Analysis of the responses to item 2 which states: "The settlers have lost their worth and integrity as a result of the displacement" shows that 311 or 51.83 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 191 or 31.83 per cent agreed, 76 or 12.67 per cent strongly disagreed and 22 or 3.67 per cent disagreed. It could be deduced from the response pattern that the settlers not only lost most of their

valuables but also to some extent their worth and dignity.

With regards to item 3 which states: “The break-up of the Bakassi indigenous population has some dehumanizing effect on the settlers” data shows that 285 or 47.5 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 221 or 36.33 per cent agreed, 85 or 14.17 per cent strongly disagreed, while 9 or 1.5 per cent disagreed. The response pattern suggests that because a significant number of them can no longer see their loved ones and bread winners who have decided to stay in the peninsula when others have moved to Nigeria, many may have lost their basic human virtues like dignity, integrity, affection, etc.

On the responses to item 4 which states: “The displacement has infringed upon the fundamental human rights of the settlers” data shows that 314 or 52.33 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 99 or 16.5 per cent agreed, 105 or 17.5 per cent strongly disagreed, while 82 or 13.67 per cent disagreed. This explains in part the major effect of the displacement to be the denial of right of the Bakassi indigenes to live in their ancestral homes and to own properties. In other words, they were denied the right of freedom to live where they want.

With regards to item 5 which states: “The Bakassi people are impoverished by their displacement”, data shows that 319 or 53.17 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 209 or 34.8 per cent agreed, 11 or 1.83 per

cent strongly disagreed, while 61 or 10.17 per cent disagreed. The pattern of responses shows interesting feature that must be interpreted with care. It poses a problem when one realizes that the settlers merely compared their present status with how it was in the peninsula. In other words, when their present condition is compared with what was obtained in the peninsula, they felt they were impoverished.

Analysis of the responses to item 6 which states: “The neighbouring communities see the settlers as inferior to them” shows that 365 or 60.83 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 109 or 18.17 per cent agreed, 28 or 4.67 per cent strongly disagreed, while 98 or 16.33 per cent disagreed. It implies from the pattern of responses that the settlers believe that their neighbours see them as inferior human beings.

With regards to item 7 which states: “The settlers are perceived by government officials as ingrates and beggars”, data shows that 275 or 45.83 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 88 or 14.67 per cent agreed, 117 or 19.5 per cent strongly disagreed, while 120 or 20 per cent disagreed. The pattern of responses implies that there is a strained relationship between government officials responsible for the resettlement processes and the settlers. It could also be inferred that the pressure on government to provide for the settlers is responsible for what may be considered as the

attitude of these government officials.

Analysis of the responses to item 8 which states: “The settlers have accepted their displacement status in good faith” shows that 301 or 50.17 per cent strongly agreed, 167 or 27.83 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 72 or 12 per cent strongly disagreed and 60 or 10 per cent disagreed. The response pattern is meaningful when it is noted that Bakassi indigenes were helpless in the face of the displacement and had no other option but to accept it.

With regards to item 9 which states: “The settlers do not have the innovative spirit to succeed in the resettlement”, data shows that 11 or 1.83 per cent respondents strongly agreed, 8 or 1.33 per cent agreed, 289 or 48.17 per cent strongly

disagreed, while 292 or 48.67 per cent disagreed. The response pattern is substantively meaningful when it is noted that the Bakassi people do not so much depend on government for survival but believe that they were industrious and hard working people and have the necessary resources to succeed in the resettlement.

Analysis of the responses on whether the condition of the Bakassi settlers can be likened to status depreciation, shows that 249 or 41.5 per cent strongly agreed, 214 or 35.67 per cent agreed, 63 or 10.5 per cent strongly disagreed and 74 or 12.33 per cent disagreed. The response pattern shows that the Bakassi settlers felt that their status has depreciated as a result of the displacement.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the Relationship between Displacement Status and the Welfare of Bakassi Indigenes in Cross River State.

Variables	ΣY	ΣY^2	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣXY	r-cal
Welfare of Bakassi indigenes (Y)	8,760	154,650				
					161,355	*0.70
Displacement status of Bakassi settlers (X)	10,054	184,790				

*Significant at $P > .05, df = 598, Crit-r = 0.194, N = 600$

The result of the analysis reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.70 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.194 at 0.05 levels of significance with 598 degrees of freedom. With the result of this analysis the

alternate hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. This result therefore shows that there is a significant relationship between displacement status and the welfare

of Bakassi indigenes in Cross River State, Nigeria.

4. Discussions

The study indicates that a significant relationship exists between settlers' displacement status and the welfare of Bakassi indigenes in Cross River States. Findings reveal that the displacement has infringed upon the fundamental human rights of the settlers by denying them their homes, property, means of livelihood, etc. Thus, the major effect of the displacement has been the denial of right of Bakassi indigenes to live in their ancestral homes and to own properties. This finding is in agreement with previous studies. Fredga (2001) and Bassel (2009) assert that the condition under which displaced people find themselves does not anchor on human right approach and no due respect is paid to ethical principles, especially the right to own property. The compulsory evacuation of Bakassi indigenes from their ancestral homes in the peninsula is typically carried out without regard for their basic human rights and integrity. The findings also agree with Foss and Bonn (2009) who reported that displaced persons are not only disenfranchised but also treated as refugees. The findings also support Bachul (2008) who opined that involuntary displacement is characterized by the violation of human rights.

The displacement makes the Bakassi settlers unable to cope with or adapt easily to changes in their new

environment. This also undermines their ability to make fast and meaningful existence. The displacement therefore is an inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment to the people. The findings also indicate that the Bakassi indigenes were impoverished by their displacement. The settlers lost most of their valuables and source of livelihood due to their displacement, such that many of them became dependents and unemployed. This is in support of Ozuliman (2008) who reported that poverty and ill treatment of displaced persons exist in almost all resettlement operations worldwide, although they manifest themselves differently across countries and communities. The displacement not only makes it more difficult for the Bakassi settlers to recover all they have lost, but it also interferes with attempts to cope with the future.

Evidence from the study showed that the Bakassi people were spited by their neighbours. They were not only spited but also stigmatized and discredited. This is in agreement with Fredga (2001) who reported that displaced persons were seen as undesirable people by some persons in the society. This is also in line with Brenda (2011) who reported that displaced persons were believed to be significantly discredited and this serves to reduce their status in the society. The Bakassi indigenes were also stigmatized, discriminated and suffer undue prejudice, negative attitudes, abuse and maltreatment

from their host communities who in the first instance refused to accommodate them despite government intervention. They receive poor treatment in healthcare, education and other social amenities.

5. Conclusion

Displacement of persons from their ancestral homes has become a global concern in recent times. Often times, the burdens of displacement become so heavy upon the victims that spirited individuals, government, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international agencies do not hesitate to lend their support and care. In most cases these humanitarian support and care could not sustain the settlers for long, leading to the collapse of the resettlement at the long run.

Moreover, the negative attitude toward the settlers is usually intense at the beginning only to be absorbed over the years. Based on the findings of this study, we call on those governmental agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations

(NGOs) concerned with the implementation of resettlement programmes to embark on vigorous education campaigns among neighboring and host communities in the resettlement area. The campaigns should emphasize attitudinal change and the need for accommodation of resettled persons. The mass media should be used in creating this awareness and enlightenment among the people. Efforts should also be made through workshops, seminars, and conferences to bring about this awareness. The study also suggests that government should take a strategic sustainable development approach to address the challenges confronting displaced persons, including economic empowerment, provision of employment opportunities, infrastructural development and to ensure functional participation of settlers in the decision making framework, planning and operations of the resettlement.

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