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# Supporting the fight against terrorism: A proposal for public library services provision for internally displaced persons in North-East Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examined the state of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria, the need to provide education and information services to the IDPs, and the role of libraries. It begins with the remote cause of the displacement. The paper also examined the state of the IDPs in terms of education and information services provision. It reported that the IDPs live in very deplorable conditions. There are no provisions for education and information services. The paper further discussed the importance of education and information to IDPs especially the children, teens, and youths. It recommended the empowerment and involvement of public libraries in the provision of education and information services to IDPs. It alluded that public libraries and librarians are better positioned to provide education and information services to displaced persons. The paper concluded that if necessary logistics and support are provided, libraries and librarians have the capacity to provide effective and efficient education and information services to IDPs and therefore bridge the current gap.

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## Introduction

North-East Nigeria has been under siege of terrorism for some time now. The region consists of three main states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. The ongoing armed conflict started as a mere religious crisis orchestrated by the Boko Haram Islamist sect. Now in its tenth year, the crisis has degenerated into a full-blown terrorist war; resulting in environmental degradation, destruction of lives and infrastructure, poverty, health challenges and insecurity. The Boko Haram Islamic sect is a religious group that is interested in creating an independent caliphate in North-East Nigeria, using any means possible including armed conflict and terrorism. The Nigerian Government's resistance to the activities of the sect has resulted in a humanitarian crisis. OCHA (2017) observed that since the crisis started, more than 20,000 people have been killed; the terrorist sect have abducted thousands of women, young girls, and children, leading to millions of people fleeing their homes; OCHA

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estimates that about 1.9 million people are internally displaced. Some of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) take shelter in urban areas where there is relative safety, while others are sheltered in make-shift camps located in various parts of the region; military and para-military personnel provide security in and around the camps. Currently, there are 32 formal camps sheltering about 190,000 IDPs. Other IDPs live among friends and relatives in various parts of the country. The Federal and State Governments are saddled with the primary responsibility of catering for the needs of the IDPs in and outside these camps. Unfortunately, the government has not been able to meet required expectations. The disruption of basic services like health care, education, information, food, water, and electricity provision means IDPs are in critical need of humanitarian interventions.

IDPs also have information needs. Sambo (2017) outlined the information needs of internally displaced persons to include information on the current status of the crisis, information on how to locate missing family members, and information on security, health care, food, and shelter provisions. Sambo lamented that there are no adequate provisions to meet these needs in the IDPs' camps. Also, UNICEF (2015) noted that there were about 66,000 children in IDP camps in the region as at 2015. A greater percentage of internally displaced children live outside formal camps. These children do not have access to formal education. Lack of access to information and education has grave consequences to the individual, community, and the nation at large. This paper therefore explores the possible role of libraries in bridging the information and education gap among IDPs in North-East Nigeria.

### **Importance of education and information to internally displaced persons**

Information is instrumental to the development of any country because the level of education and information possessed by citizens is pivotal to national growth and productivity hence information is seen as the fifth factor of production (Adebayo 2012). Despite the value of information, it can only be maximized with a reasonable level of education. Consequently, education and information go together in the development of citizens including internally displaced persons.

One major challenge of developing countries like Nigeria is high poverty levels among their citizens. BBC (2012) observed that nearly 61% of Nigerians live in poverty; many live on less than a \$1 per day. The situation is even worse among the IDPs in northern Nigeria. A long term solution to this economic crisis is timely provision of education and information to the citizenry. Education and information are vital in poverty eradication especially among the internally displaced persons. Education develops the individual and empowers him or her to maximally utilize information for

economic benefits. It also provides opportunity for better employment and job creation. When the level of employment among this unique set of individuals in the country is on the increase as a result of good education and information utilization, the level of productivity simultaneously increases and this also has positive effect on the overall gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. Colin (n.d) reiterated that investment in education culminates to higher levels of private and public income and increase in income results in greater purchasing power for citizens and the easy achievement of the development goals of the country. Similarly, Smith et al. (2011) unequivocally stated that education is just the most important tool for human development and the best tool for eradication of poverty. Turkkahraman (2012) noted that education and society complement each other; this is because no society can carry on effectively and efficiently without education of its citizens. This implies that when there is sufficient number of well-educated people in the community, there is bound to be rapid development in that community. In the words of the latter 'that a community cannot improve its well-fare degree without raising its educational level is a sociological fact'.

Another importance of education and information to internally displaced persons is health promotion. With the right information at the disposal of these persons, there would be better and healthier health practices among them. Todaro and Smith (2011) opined that education and public enlightenment campaigns on issues relating to basic sanitation and hygiene can bring about a drastic reduction in the spread of disease and also help to reduce the pressure on the health system of the country. It is an educated parent that would be in a best position to produce better nourished children. When parents are not well informed or educated, they may not be able to practice good hygiene due to ignorance. They will not be furnished with the proper information to plan their family in order to enhance their income or financial status. For instance, education on issues like family planning and diseases such as HIV/AIDS cannot be achieved among the internally displaced persons without education and this in the long run affects the health of these citizens. A well-educated and informed woman would know the right step to take on issues regarding family planning, immunization, simple hygiene, etc. International save the Children Alliance (2008) categorically noted in their publication on Education in Emergencies that 'education can help protect children from death or bodily harm by providing life-saving critical information pertaining to simple hygiene and health matters which may have emerged as an aftermath of the emergency'. No doubt, education and information have a great role to play in promoting the health of internally displaced persons.

For IDPs, the pursuit of education and information can help create the sense or feeling of a daily routine and the establishment of routine activity. Rhoades (2010) opined that the introduction of education in the lives of

IDPS can help to alleviate the long-term trauma and severe shock which they had initially experienced. It is no news that these group of individuals face emotional and psychological trauma as a result of the conflict experience in their communities hence their present circumstance—displacement; however, this trauma can be gradually overcome through the process of education which not only furnishes them with needed information but also serves as a platform for emotional healing and in some instances recreation and establishment of new relationships. Though the lives and education of IDPs have already being disrupted by events, multicultural education programs can be a solution if they are to recover from the trauma and face the future ahead (Badau and Ndagana 2016). Dryden-Peterson (2015) and Shah (2015) also suggested that “non-formal and formal education opportunities of a reasonably high standard can provide a certain level of psychosocial protection and support for forcibly displaced peoples, as regular education activities can help to restore a sense of stability and hope among affected populations”

The level of self-awareness and self-assurance would also be heightened by increase in the level of education and information made available to internally displaced persons. Self-awareness simply implies ‘the capacity for introspection and the ability to recognize oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals (Meriam Webster, 2018). It connotes having a proper understanding of your individual needs, desires, habits, character, etc. There is tendency for this to be lacking among the internally displaced persons; but with the provision of information and education, this can be avoided. The level of self-awareness and assurance brings about increase in the level of independence among this group of people despite their present condition. When they have a high sense of self-awareness, they are better informed of their abilities and capabilities and thereby become more useful to themselves, immediate environment, and the country as a whole. It is paramount to note that to deny the internally displaced persons, especially children of education is tantamount to denying them of crucial survival skills, a sense of self-worth and the capacity to be productive citizens of a country once the emergency ends (International save the Children Alliance 2008).

Education and information are pertinent instruments for the transmission of cultural and social values among the internally displaced persons. Nicolai and Triplehorn (2003) noted that the process of taking internally displaced young children through classroom education serves as a stable platform for socialization and beyond socialization, recreation, and even protection; this is because “school and recreational activities can bring some elements of physical protection to the majority of children, providing a comfortable playing space, access to nutritional meals, illumination of the mind and constant adult supervision.”

Another important value of education and information to internally displaced persons is the promotion of peace and the reconstruction of post-

conflict societies. The quality education that has been imbibed by the internally displaced persons would help in the process of conflict resolution. There is a tendency for conflict to reoccur later in future in their communities but when these individuals are furnished with the proper information and well educated on various issues relating to conflict resolution, there would be a high level of tolerance and higher levels of respect for human rights (International save the Children Alliance 2008). Due to the immeasurable value education and information has to offer, government and related institutions should make education a core aspect of humanitarian response.

### **Challenges of education and information services provision to idps**

As earlier alluded, a country's essential and primary means of development has been accepted to be education. According to Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (RCEIS 2006), "a country can develop only when available resources are used at their optimum by linking education to the national reality and accepting the concepts of education for all and education for development". This implies that efforts should be directed at improving access to education for internally displaced Persons (IDPs). Unfortunately, this is not the case with many IDPs especially in developing countries like Nigeria. A review of literature reveals that IDPs are plagued with a lot of challenges among which is poor education and information services provision. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2017) as cited by Sambo (2017) reports that, "Displaced people face a number of hardships, including lack of access to water, health-care, shelter, education, information and a basic income". UNESCO (2017) in its 2030 education brief, identified Nigeria as one of the countries affected by protracted conflict which has disrupted education for children. Deng (2003) is of the view that "despite the apparent recognition of the positive role of education in human development, improving access to education has been elusive across the globe particularly in the developing countries and specifically Sub-Sahara Africa." This goes further to buttress the opinion of Akuto (2017) who listed lack of access to education as one of the major challenges faced by IDPs in Nigeria. The latter is of the view that IDPs are facing the challenge of educating their children or family members because they are always in transit or floating, and more to that there are no provisions by government in this regard for them.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (RCEIS 2006) opined that insecurity and poor economic status are factors that restrict IDPs from accessing education; also, difficulty faced in accessing education in their mother tongue could be a problem, in situations when they have to migrate to other places or countries as the case may be. According to Health & Education Advice and Resource Team (HEART

2016), IDPs especially girls and women face so many barriers to education. Though many of these challenges are similar to those faced by other crisis-affected populations, IDPs are more vulnerable due to the loss of livelihood, home, and possessions. School fees are one of the most significant barriers for IDPs; other barriers listed are:

- lack of education providers within or near camps and other IDP settlements;
- loss of documentation;
- inability to meet residency requirements for school enrolment.

It is important to note that education is a part of the human right law, which is acknowledged globally, but so many internally displaced adults and children across the world have been denied this right. In a research conducted by Badau (2012) on boko haram insurgency in Nigeria, they were of the opinion that children are frequently denied the right to education and they are also denied the opportunity to develop and acquire the skills, knowledge, and competence to better cope with the prevailing difficult circumstances and to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. In cases where emergency education was provided for IDPs, there were challenges of inadequate human, financial and material resources. Badau and Oluweselu (2015) also identified curriculum design and coordination as challenges of educational services provision among IDPs.

Provision of information services are usually carried out by agencies like media houses, government and non-governmental agencies, libraries and others. However, insecurity challenges hamper the services of these agencies. In North-East Nigeria, the roads to IDP camps are not pliable due to insurgency. There have been reported killings of persons including United Nations staff who were out to carry out humanitarian services. Information from the broadcast media is only accessible through electronic devices which are not affordable by IDPs. Thus education and information services provision is almost nonexistent among the IDPs.

### **Libraries and internally displaced persons: connecting the nexus**

It is a fact that internally displaced persons are faced with enormous challenges hindering their continuing education and access to information. However, the crux of this paper is identifying a role for libraries, with a view to providing long term solutions to the challenges. Literature search reveals that libraries have played important roles in education and information services provision to displaced persons around the world. For example, Refugees Read Inc, dedicated its first library to the Kiryandongo resettlement camp in Uganda and this was funded by Hamilton Community, Northeast Indiana. Kiryandongo

resettlement camp plays host to a number of IDPs from the war in northern Uganda and serves as refugee camp to Kenyans, Sudanese, and Rwandese (Ralston 2010). Also, Book Wish Foundation raised funds for the construction of libraries in the Treguine, Bredjing, and Gaga refugees and IDPs camps in Eastern Chad, (CORD 2010). In the same vein, in January 2010, UNICEF, along with its partners, supported the Government of Pakistan with tin trunk libraries services for up to 40,000 persons displaced due to a massive mountain landslide. Also, Kenya's post-election violence had displaced more than 600,000 persons within the country since December 2007. In response to the massive displacement, the Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS) and other relief organizations established about 200 camps and provided library services for approximately half of the IDPs (Mwiandi. 2008). Public libraries in the United States started providing specialized services to immigrants for self-education, enlightenment, political updates and English studies in 2007. They achieved this feat with support from Andrew Carnegie Foundation. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Institute of Museum and Library Services Library Services for Immigrants, 2007). Unfortunately, there are no records of sustained efforts made by libraries to provide information services to IDPs in north-east Nigeria. In the studies conducted by (Okojie 2010) and (Azubogu, Obichere, and Anyanwu 2011) on funding of libraries in Nigeria by government or external funding bodies, there was no mention of library services provision for IDPs.

Looking at the peculiar situation of IDPs in Nigeria, it is obvious that public libraries are better placed than all other types of libraries to attend to the educational and information needs of IDPs.

Public libraries play a vital role in creating an information literate society. Ode and Omokaro (2007) explain that public libraries help to assist in developing learning skills among children, youths and adults. They play a crucial role in encouraging continuing education as well as empowering members of the community. Essentially, the role of libraries is to inform, entertain, enlighten, educate, empower and equip individuals and communities for lifelong learning. More importantly, public libraries have also served as an integral part of rebuilding post-disaster communities. The public library can be described as a perennial agency, an integral part of a modern democracy, charged with providing opportunities for free and equitable access to educational, cultural, and all round literacy information to reach all citizens. Lopez, Caspe, and McWilliams (2016) captured the importance of public libraries succinctly:

*“public libraries are centers of community support for citizens. They are meant to engage with their communities beyond their traditional core business, by offering unique learning experience and opportunities for people to create and make, rather than just consume content”*

The public library is increasingly becoming part of reintegration teams responsible for offering support to IDPs (Bateman 2016). Stewart (2014) admonishes that Public librarians can no longer stay solely focused on preservation of their culture and resources. They are to play active roles as essential service providers along with other teams in times of crisis.

In the Nigerian situation, public libraries should work in consonance with other bodies like the National Emergency Management (NEMA), Red Cross, and Government Ministries. They would also need the help of the military for security of human and material resources. Interestingly, there are public libraries in major towns of the states where there are IDPs. These libraries can extend their services to IDPs through the following means.

### **Identifying the information needs of the IDPs**

Bothma and Bergenholtz (2013) suggest that there is need for librarians to carry out a needs analysis in order ascertain the exact information needs of the target population so as to develop and offer the right information services apt and customized to address the needs of the IDPs. By training, librarians have the capacity and they are charged with the responsibility of determining information needs of any target population. By studying and surveying the community, they ensure that they provide the right information to the right people at the right time.

### **Provision of relevant and basic reading material**

The role of public libraries also includes the provision of free/affordable and equitable access to information for all displaced people. Adequate provision of relevant and basic reading materials that cut across age, gender, religion, political affiliation and all forms of disabilities to support literacy and life-long learning will help individuals to complete tasks that are basic for their everyday survival.

This will also help the IDPs to discover their learning potential, as well as develop creativity and language skills. This will in turn have a positive impact on the IDPs and subsequently help them to reintegrate into the society. In agreement, UNESCO (1994) considers provision of relevant and basic reading materials as an essential requirement for producing educated and informed citizenry in the society.

### **Provision of reading and language café**

Lopez, Caspe, and McWilliams (2016) and Beyond (Access 2016) in their empirical studies discovered that the first five years of a child's life is critical and should be a time when the child should be helped to read and learn.

According to the latter, reading to and with the child is non-negotiable so as to foster love for books and reading; this will also help the children to develop their language, vocabulary and also stimulate brain development. Aslett (2004) encouraged public libraries to work in conjunction with the National library, publishers, teachers, and companies to organize debates, reading/writing competitions, quiz etc. in IDP camps. Librarians from public libraries could visit the IDPs periodically to render this service.

### **Provision of mobile library**

Mobile libraries offer opportunities for remote access, they take the library to the target population. Expecting the IDP's to come to the public library building which may be far from their camps would be a herculean task. This service facilitates access to library resources. The mobile libraries provide relevant literature and information services to the IDPs to support information literacy. A typical example is the John Pofi Foundation mobile Library Services in Jos which was targeted at educating and touching the lives of displaced children in north-central Nigeria (John Pofi Foundation Mobile Library 2016).

### **Audio-visual resources**

The effect of violence often times leaves people with resentment, anger and trauma. Children whose schooling have been disrupted are left with boredom. Radio, television and film shows can be employed by public libraries as tools for promoting healing and reconciliation. It is also an effective tool for informing and teaching IDPs safety, security and health tips. For example, the Yobe State Government recently distributed over 5000 transistor radios to internally displaced persons in the state (African Independent Television 2017). The IDPs would be able to gain access to important information and counseling services through the radios. The Yobe State Library board can work with a local radio station to provide information services (using local language) through the radios to IDPs. A non-governmental organization, The Osasu Show Social Enterprise Project (TOSSEP) is involved in presentations of television shows to internally displaced persons in Nigeria (Daily Trust, 2018). The TOSSEP Television programs provide important information to promote healing, reconciliation, health and economic empowerment among IDPs. The programs are aired through local and satellite stations.

Libraries and librarians can enter into partnership with TOSSEP and other relevant agencies, taking advantage of television and other communication media to provide information services to IDPs. However, there is need for the government to provide necessary equipment to facilitate the viewing of these programs in the IDP camps.

## Provision of internet access

Provision of sustainable cost-effective internet access is one of the functions of public libraries. For the IDPs who may have lost their means of livelihood to crisis and find themselves in an economic quagmire, the public libraries help to bridge the digital and information gap by providing essentially free access to information and communication technologies. Discussing the response of librarians after a highly destructive earthquake and tsunamis in Japan, Flaherty (2016) revealed that librarians played a heroic role by providing internet access. A similar response came after Hurricane Katrina where public libraries provided information infrastructure for IDPs. The IDPs were provided with scanners which helped them to send scan valuable documents. The public library makes it possible for the literate IDPs to connect to and use social media services such as Skype to keep in touch with relatives (Jaeger et al. 2006).

Providing access to the internet will enable IDPs to receive timely information as regards public services, health, education, and financial services. This will ensure that the IDPs are not excluded from receiving vital internet access.

For these vulnerable group, who may have lost their means of livelihood to crisis and find themselves in an economic quagmire, the public libraries help to bridge the digital and information gap by providing essentially free access to information and communication technologies.

## Peace campaigns

One major role public libraries could play in crises situations is promotion of peace and peaceful coexistence among communities. Following weeks of protests and riots, the public library in Missouri played a leading role in communicating government efforts to the people (Castillo and Ford 2014). The World Economic Forum (2016) reported that some public libraries in Jigawa State, Nigeria in partnership with a local NGO, are promoting peaceful coexistence by establishing peace clubs in affected communities. In France, public libraries provide brochures and leaflets in the most used languages, promoting peace and peaceful coexistence. They also organize workshops on a regular basis where refugees could improve their skills. These activities are carried out in partnership with non-profit organizations (International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA); Public library section 2015).

## Provision of business resources/workshops

These include resources that will help with business and entrepreneurship information, job opportunities and how-to-do-it-yourself manuals. Logan City Council's Libraries in Australia partnered with an NGO to organize 'Get Job Ready' workshops focused on training people on the necessary

digital literacy skills they require to re-enter the workforce (IFLA, nd). This kind of service would be beneficial to IDPs especially in their bid to be re-integrated into their various communities and the society at large.

### **Past efforts of Nigerian libraries**

The National Library of Nigeria has made commendable efforts at providing information services and training for IDPs in some parts of the country. Novak (2016) observed that in 2015, the National Library organized a training on job-seeking strategies and practice for the interview process for IDPs. The training was done at the IDP's camp in Abuja, the nation's capital. Since then, the National library has organized training programs consisting of basic ICT literacy courses and how to improve skills needed by current job market. These trainings have been very successful and impactful (Novak 2016b).

In Jigawa State, closed to the conflict areas, public libraries in collaboration with a non-governmental organization are promoting peaceful coexistence among communities through activities targeted at youths. Through the activities of these libraries, peace clubs have been established in local communities and camps to prevent communal clashes and promote peaceful coexistence. Novak (2016b) noted that over 700 youths were engaged in the program within six months. Public libraries in Abuja (Nigeria's capital) and Kaduna State (northern Nigeria) have also been involved in information services provision to internally displaced persons.

However, these efforts though commendable, were not enough due to the large number of IDPs who need such services. The efforts were also not sustainable on a long term due to required logistics such as manpower and funding. The libraries do not have adequate staff to run these programs continuously. It is important to note that none of these efforts have been targeted at IDPs and their camps in north-east Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The present state of IDPs in north-east Nigeria calls for urgent attention; government at all levels need to provide the necessary support for libraries and librarians to provide effective and efficient education and information services to IDPs and therefore bridge the current gap. It is on this note that the paper made the following recommendations:

- Policies on education and information services provision to the disadvantaged groups like IDPs should be formulated and approved by the government. The policy should address all important issues including funding, logistics and security for education and information services provision. This will make information provision to these groups

realistic. The National Library of Nigeria should take the lead in advocating for the formulation of such policies.

- **Manpower provision:** For public libraries to provide information services to IDPs, they need adequate staff. In Nigeria, public libraries are funded and managed by Government. Due to the current economic recession in the country, both the Federal and State Governments have placed embargoes on employment. Employment embargoes need to be lifted so that libraries can recruit more staff. However, as a temporary measure, libraries can also identify displaced librarians in the camps who are willing to act as volunteers.
- **Adoption of Mobile Library services.** Mobile library service model has been very successful in addressing the information needs of IDPs in other countries. A good example is the model developed by a French-based charity - Libraries without border. This charity organization developed an information toolkit called 'Ideas Box'. The ideas box project was first implemented in Burundi in 2014 (Novak 2016b). The project recorded a huge success and had more than 3000 registered users within 3 months. The project has recorded huge successes in Jordan, Ethiopia and parts of France, United States of America and Australia (Novak 2016b). Public libraries in Nigeria can go into partnership with libraries without borders and implement a viable mobile service model that will adequately address the needs of IDPs.
- The Federal Government should ensure that budget allocations for education and information service provision to IDPs are correctly deployed and utilized at all levels. Relevant Government and non-governmental agencies should monitor and evaluate fund disbursement from time to time.
- Public libraries need to be financially empowered to render services to IDPs. Development of libraries in the country has been hampered by lack of funds and corruption in time past. The Government should increase budgetary allocations to libraries. There is also need for total eradication of corruption in the entire system of government. By so doing, fund allocated for library development will be utilized for that purpose. This is achievable through proper monitoring and evaluation by anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Monies allocated to libraries for development and information services provision should be judiciously expended.
- Libraries should also seek for alternate funding from international organizations that sponsor library development, such as Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New-York and other international Non-Governmental organizations. This will enable them to extend education and information service to IDPs. The Federal Government needs to encourage multinational companies in Nigeria to fund libraries and information centers located near IDP camps as part of their corporate social responsibility.

- Librarians would also need to be trained on education and information services provision to internally displaced persons. Internally displaced persons are different from the regular library users. IDPs have unique behaviors and needs. Librarians need to be trained on how to attend to these unique set of users. The National Library of Nigeria as the apex governing body for libraries in the country are in a better position to organize relevant workshops for librarians working with IDPs.
- Government need to provide adequate security for both human and material resources in the IDP camps. The roads leading to the camps need to be secured for easy movement of resources. Public libraries would not be able to carry out any form of service to the IDPs at the risk of safety of lives and properties.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributor

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