



Migration and Resettlement Challenges of Bakassi Returnees in Yenagoa

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Abstract

The study examined migration and resettlement challenges of the Bakassi returnees in Yenagoa. A total of 558 respondents answered the questionnaire out of an estimated 4,500 returnees. Mean and standard deviation statistical tools were employed in the analysis. The mean scores determine the acceptance or rejection of the rating items. The mean responses were computed on the 4 point Likert type scale of $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$. Any mean score above 2.50 was accepted. The study concluded that the people are fraught with challenges of resettlement in their home state mainly because the Bayelsa State government was yet to redeem promises made to the people before their return. Their major challenges and needs are habitable accommodation in their communities of origin, employment, scholarships/schools for their children and health/toilet facilities. Others are money to acquire tools and/or start trading, skill acquisition programmes and toilet/health facilities in the present camp until their resettlement. The study recommended for timely resettlement of the people and closure of the camp, which is fast becoming criminals' haven.

Keywords: Migration, Resettlement, challenges, Bakassi IDPs, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Ingiabuna, E. T. (2017). Migration and Resettlement Challenges of Bakassi Returnees in Yenagoa. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 10(2), 212-220. Retrieved [DATE] from <http://www.ij sre.com>

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INTRODUCTION

The dispute over the ownership of the Bakassi peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon and the judgment of the International court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague, Netherland require Nigeria to cede portions of the disputed territory to Cameroon. With the view to implement the decisions of the World Court without skirmishes, both countries signed an agreement in the city of Green

Tree, New York on June 12, 2006. Following this, the Nigeria government evacuated her citizens to Nkang, Cross River State. The action dislocated many families from their means of habitual abodes as well as means of livelihood. State Governments in Nigeria were directed to get involved in order to identify and evacuate their citizens to their States of origin. The Bayelsa State Government in conjunction with National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) evacuated her citizens from Nkang to Yenagoa for safety and for proper resettlement in their home towns. Since 2006 when the last batches of the returnees were relocated to the temporary camp along Azikoro road, in Yenagoa, the camp has become a permanent abode because government is yet to fulfill the promises of resettling the returnees to their communities of origin.

The returnees who migrated from rural Bayelsa to Bakassi territory mainly for fishing and trading needed no formal education or special training for their trade. However, their survival in urban Yenagoa requires some form of formal education. With many lacking formal education and the wherewithal to live in urban area were occupations needed for survival are not fishing and associated activities with which they are familiar with, but demand some appreciable level of formal education and training, the returnees are constrained to look for alternative activities to survive pending their resettlement by government in their communities. Many of the returnees are unemployable in both the public and private sectors because of lack of skills and formal educational training, and government having failed to provide the needed assistance, how do they cope with their predicament, and what are possible ways of ameliorating their plight by government and NGOs, their challenges and needs as well as assistance package.

Statement of the Problem

When displaced persons are visited by government and NGOs, the understanding is that they will have some succour. When people are evacuated from a troubled territory, the feeling is that they are being taken to a safer haven. The Bakassi returnees were evacuated from the Bakassi territory now in Cameroon to Nkang in Nigeria, and from Nkang to Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with promises of proper resettlement by Federal and Bayelsa State governments. What are the resettlement challenges of the people, what have both Federal and State governments done to ameliorate their plight? What are their real problems and needs?

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine the resettlement situation of the returnees from Bakassi, now in Yenagoa. The specific objectives are:

- To examine the resettlement challenges of the people.
- To evaluate the real needs of the returnees as a result of their movement from Bakassi territory to Yenagoa..

Research Questions

- What are the resettlement challenges of the Bakassi returnees?
- What are the real needs of the returnees?

LITERATURE REVIEW

International boundary adjustments often result in migration and resettlement. Wood (1994) defines migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary. He unlike the singular demographic events of birth and death; a person can migrate many times, for varied durations, and across numerous territorial divisions. To Ekong (2003) migration refers to movement of people from one geographical location to another either on a temporary or permanent basis. He notes further that students of the phenomenon have agreed that it is difficult to speak of the 'causes' of migration as such; since causation connotes absoluteness whereas it is usually difficult to cite this or that factor as the absolute cause of a person's decision to move. According to him it is therefore more scientific to refer to the correlates of migration, which refers to factors that are systematically related to the phenomenon of migration without necessarily providing causation.

Tracing the historical emergence of migration worldwide, Wikipedia (n.d) notes that historically migration of human populations begins with the movement of *Homo erectus* out of Africa across Eurasia about a million years ago. *Homo sapiens* appear to have colonized all of Africa about 150,000 years ago, moved out of Africa 70,000 years ago, and had spread across to Australia, Asia and Europe by 40,000 years ago. Migration to the Americas took place 20 to 15,000 years ago, and by 2,000 years ago, most of the Pacific Islands were colonized.

Smith (2001) notes that the behaviour of people, which is reflected in their decisions to locate in risky areas, shows that those individuals and their communities are not ignorant of the existence of these threats. Choices are made and decisions taken on the benefits of occupying hazardous environments. This decision making is based on risk perception, which can be expected to vary between the individual/household level and the organizational level.

Migration may also be 'staged' or 'creep' because migrants do not move from their village to a large city at once, but moves first to a small town or city from village to a larger city. The advantage of staged migration is that it affords the migrant the opportunity to adjust to an increasingly complex urban situation (Ekong, 2003). Ekong noted further that most rural migrants in Nigeria can be labelled as 'target migrants' who move to other areas outside their native territories to make enough money to meet specific targets after which they return home. Such specific targets may range from bride price, to trading or business capital. They may also acquire new skills from their destination with which they return. Even among the highly educated who move for white collar jobs in the city, the city is merely a place to make a living and then return at retirement to one's village of origin (Ekong, 2003, p. 49).

Gugler in Ekpenyong noted further that since land, labour and capital are not evenly distributed; geographical mobility is a response to area imbalances. The decision to migrate is the result of the individual weighting up the relative merits of their present location and the reasonable alternatives in the light of their capabilities or more satisfactory way of life. Scholars like Samir Amin and Joel Gregory expound the view that inequalities are a functional part of the capitalist development and that migration is in response to such inequalities (Ekpenyong, 1999, p. 51).

According to Muggah (2003) migration usually involves an element of choice, which is central to the dichotomy between forced or "involuntary" displacement and "voluntary" migration. "If it is voluntary, it is not displacement". Voluntary and economic migration is more a reflection of people's deliberate pursuit of new opportunities. Displacement becomes "involuntary" when the choice to remain is not provided.

Forced migration flows result from a variety of causal factors. These include wars, persecution, natural disasters, location of new industries or other infrastructures, environmental degradation, ethnic discrimination, boundary adjustment, etc. Forced migrations are commonly classified/discussed under two topics of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). While much more attention is placed in the analysis of the situation of refugees than IDPs, yet both are subjected to the same condition – deprivation (Force Migration Guide online). While explaining the differences between refugee and IDPs, the United Nations define IDPs as:

Persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Wikipedia, n.d)

Amos (2012, p. 4) noted that despite the efforts of humanitarian organizations displacement often leads to hunger and illness, both physical and mental. There is loss of dignity, as individuals and families become dependent on others for survival. Children are unable to go to school and many are not able to get the health care that they need. The effects of displacement can last a lifetime and beyond, damaging the prospects of future generations. For many displaced people in the world, the experience can result in a permanent loss of livelihood or employment opportunities, and can turn into chronic destitution. The effect of this is that people lose contact with their countries, their cultures, and their communities, and this may be devastating to them.

Deng (1999) noted that there is growing awareness within the international community of the magnitude of the crisis of internal displacement that affects between 20 and 25 million people worldwide. While the responsibility for the protection of IDPs falls first and foremost on national governments and local authorities, it is vital that the international community provide protection and assistance for IDPs in cooperation with the governments concerned. International protection and assistance especially become needed where governments lack the will or the capacity to provide for their own displaced populations, which is tragically often the case in conflicts caused by, or resulting in, acute crises of national identity.

Annan (1998) sees internal displacement as particularly tragic because of the physical, social and psychological dangers and indignities to which it exposes innocent people. He says the usual causes of the most problematic type of displacement are themselves traumatic: violent conflicts, man-made and natural disasters in which discrimination on a variety of grounds feature prominently. Whether the victims are forced into camps or choose to hide away in unchartered territory or merge into communities that are often equally ravaged, initial displacement nearly always have devastating effect on families, cultures, jobs, education, and the security of a stable society. Above all, he said, it denies innocent people access to food, shelter, and medicine and exposes them to all manners of violence. If left unaddressed, internally displacement may not only cause internal instability but may spill across borders and upset external and regional stability. There is therefore a compelling need for the international community to strengthen its support for national efforts to assist and protect displaced populations.

Vincent (2001) explained that although many of the conditions facing internally displaced persons may be the same with refugees, we know that their context can be very different as a result of their closer proximity to the actual armed actors or potential security and

protection threats. On his part, Traavik (2001) described the situation of IDPs as “to fall between two chairs”. He said on one hand they have been let down by their own national authorities that were supposed to protect them from becoming IDPs in the first instance. On the other hand, unlike refugees, they do not have an international organization to deal with their plight. The basic principle of state sovereignty limits the ability of the international community to provide them with assistance and protection. Vincent (2001) noted further that for urban IDPs, displacement may be exacerbated by the additional hardship of adapting to congested urban slums where public services do not exist or are underdeveloped and where IDPs feel they cannot access local authorities for assistance.

Brun (2003) notes that many IDPs find themselves economically marginalized for various reasons. First, they arrive in urban areas after abandoning their assets which often include land, livestock, and housing. Second, for many of these IDPs whose skills were primarily agriculturally-based, it becomes difficult to use these skills to pursue livelihoods in urban areas. Yet their labour, skills and any cash or valuables they might have brought with them are valuable assets that allow the individual to provide food, housing, education and other basic necessities. Third, evidences that in an effort to secure their own livelihoods, local populations in Sri Lanka protect their scarce resources from IDPs. This effectively makes it even more difficult for IDPs to secure livelihoods.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A survey research design was used in carrying out this study. The design for this study follows a logical sequence that connects empirical data to the study’s research questions and ultimately to its conclusions using survey designs. As a result, this study include specific research design features from broad theoretical perspectives to help assess the issues of resettlement challenges and needs of Bakassi returnees in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This survey research aims to describe specific characteristics of the target population, which involves the gathering of limited data from the study’s accessible population. It employed this method with the hopes of identifying the resettlement challenges and needs of Bakassi returnees.

Questionnaire

In order to decipher the relevant information, a questionnaire designed along 4-point Likert type scale items that addressed the theme of the study was administered to the respondents. The items were scored on a 4-point Likert type scale of (4) Strongly Agree, SA, (3) Agree, A, (2) Disagree, D, and (1) Strongly Disagree, SD. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: section ‘A’ deals with issues of respondents’ personal data (gender, age, occupation, marital status, number of children/dependants, and level of education). Section ‘B’ is designed to elicit information on variables (resettlement problems/challenges and needs of the returnees) that may or not be responsible for issues of resettlement challenges and needs of Bakassi returnees in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This section of the questionnaire comprised 20 items.

Study Area

The Azikoro temporary resettlement camp situates along Azikoro Road in the capital city of Yenagoa is the study area. The returnees who on arrival from Cross River State, were initially camped in three government institutions, but later moved to the new site, where government provided make-shift houses to accommodate the returnees for a short while. They were also allowed to build make-shift houses for themselves. Their relocation from Bakassi followed the judgement of the World Court.

Population of Study

The population of study comprises all adult and adolescent Bakassi returnees resident in the Azikoro road temporary resettlement camp in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Scope of Study

The study centred on the resettlement challenges and needs of the Bakassi returnees of Bayelsa origin temporarily camped at Azikoro Road, in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The time frame is 2006-2015. The year 2006 marked the evacuation of the returnees from Cameroon for resettlement in Nigeria and 2015 is the period when the fieldwork was conducted.

Sample Size

Information was obtained from 558 returnees of the Bakassi resettlement camp out of an estimated 4,500 persons evacuated from Bakassi peninsula in 2006.

Method of Data Analysis

In analysing the data gathered from respondents, the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 19 was used. Mean and standard deviation (cross tabulation) method of data analysis was adopted. Mean was used to determine the strength of variables relative to the weakness of others and cross tabulation was used because it is one of the simplest and most common ways of demonstrating the presence or absence of a relationship

The mean scores determine the acceptance or rejection of the rating items in section B of the research questionnaire. In order to make decisions from results obtained, the mean responses were computed thus: $4+3+2+1= 10/4 = 2.5$. In the light of the above computation, any mean score more than 2.5 was accepted, while the mean score of 2.5 and below was taken as rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the resettlement challenges of the Bakassi returnees in Yenagoa?

The result in Table 1 illustrates that accommodation, unemployment/underemployment, working materials/tools, capital for trading, schools for their children, lack of social amenities in their present location, non-redemption of promises by government and non-reception by relatives are

some of the most pressing resettlement challenges. The absence of places to worship was rejected. The grand total of 3.2885 was accepted which means that the returnees are really going through serious resettlement challenges.

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation Distribution of Respondents' on resettlement challenges amongst the Bakassi returnees in Yenagoa

S/N	Resettlement Problems	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Remark
1.	To what extent do you agree that accommodation is one of your major problems in you effort towards resettlement	3.5878	.60101	558	Accepted
2.	To what extent do you agree that unemployment/lack of jobs is one of your major problem in you effort towards resettlement	3.5896	.60075	558	Accepted
3.	To what extent do you agree that lack of appropriate skills/training needed in Yenagoa is a major problem in you effort towards resettlement	3.4767	.60399	558	Accepted
4.	To what extent do you agree that no working materials/tools is a major problem towards resettlement	3.3065	.82226	558	Accepted
5.	To what extent do you agree that no money for trading/business is a major concern in you effort towards resettlement	3.8029	.39819	558	Accepted
6.	To what extent do you agree that no schools for the children is a your major problem in you effort towards resettlement	3.0376	.86026	558	Accepted
7.	To what extent do you agree that absence of social amenities is a major problem in you effort towards resettlement	3.3907	.97990	558	Accepted
8.	To what extent do you agree that absence of places of worships is a major problems towards resettlement	2.4695	.84422	558	Rejected
9.	To what extent do you agree that none redemption of promises by government is responsible for your resettlement problems	3.5358	.84188	558	Accepted
10.	To what extent do you agree that non-reception by relatives is a major problem in you effort towards resettlement	2.6703	.99850	558	Accepted
Grant total		3.2885			Accepted

Research Question Two: What are the real needs of the returnees?

Table 2 shows the needs that arose as a result of the movement of the returnees from a relatively rural setting to an urban area. The rationale underlying this research question was to evaluate the needs of the Bakassi returnees. The statistical analysis of respondents' answer to these items showed that new forms of needs arose as a result of the new environment they find themselves. These include modern houses, capital for trading, schools/scholarships for their children, health/toilet facilities, new skills/paid employment, transport facilities, etc. The government which promised to provide house(s) in their villages or Yenagoa for each of the returnees, money for trading, scholarship for their children, toilets/health facilities in the camp, transport facilities to returnees' communities of origin, jobs/skill acquisition programmes, and provision of school in the camp for their children failed to redeem its pledge. Thus, the grand mean of 3.0291 illustrates that the research question is accepted.

Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation Distribution of Needs of the Bakassi Returnees in Yenagoa

S/N	Items/Variables on Needs of the Returnees	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Remarks
1.	Provision of house(s) in our villages is a major need of the returnees	3.1219	.82488	558	Accepted
2.	Provision of house(s) in Yenagoa is a major need of the returnees	3.2151	.78806	558	Accepted
3.	Provision of money for trading is a major need of the returnees	3.0287	.70778	558	Accepted
4.	Provision of scholarship for the children is a major need of the returnees	3.2527	.97304	558	Accepted
5.	Provision of toilets/health facilities in the camp is a major need of the returnees	3.4875	.69289	558	Accepted
6.	Provision of transport facilities to our communities is a major need of the returnees	3.0000	.62424	558	Accepted
7.	Provision of jobs/skill acquisition programmes is a major need of the returnees	3.1470	.81687	558	Accepted
8.	Provision of security in the camp is a major need of the returnees	2.2258	1.27223	558	Rejected
9.	Provision of spouses for those without is a major need of the returnees	2.4355	1.30541	558	Rejected
10.	Provision of schools is a major need of the returnees	3.3943	.72051	558	Accepted
Grand total		3.0291			Accepted

CONCLUSION

The study found the returnees experiencing serious resettlement challenges. These results from the failure of Bayelsa State government to honour promises. The people are fraught with accommodation (habitable homes), unemployment/underemployment, and capital for trading as well as acquisition of tools to assist them in their new vocations. These are the real needs of the returnees in their present location.

There is urgent need for the rehabilitation as many who are unable to adapt to the new environment are fast becoming destitute in their home state. Many have been lured into all sorts of crimes. Government should revisit the issue of resettlement of the returnees in their home towns or other locations, and redeem earlier promises. The camp is fast becoming a den for criminals; therefore government should close down the camp to avoid their turning the area into a criminals' haven, after resettling the people.

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