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SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS: INSIGHTS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN NIGERIA

Solomon Amadasun,

*Department of Social Work,
University of Benin, Benin-City,
Edo-State, Nigeria
amadasun.s@yahoo.com*

ORCIDiD: 0000-0002-1946-0432

Abstract. One unique feature of the social work profession is the centrality of the person-in-environment perspective, which dictates that social work services are holistic. The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of social work services to internally displaced persons (IDPs). This research is a qualitative study, conducted with 15 social workers in Nigeria. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview with the participants in Abuja. Results show that social work services are largely inadequate to address the broad range of needs, issues, and concerns of displaced persons. Feasible suggestions that consider the intersectionality between people and their social environment are offered to social workers.

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Introduction

Since the past three decades, global efforts have been intensified to achieve the following objectives: raising awareness about the realities of internal displacement; creating an international legal framework that would protect displaced people from further harm; and urging States to take proactive measures in minimizing situations could result in displacements while, at the same time, taking responsibilities for affected people in cases where displacement is inevitable (Cohen & Deng, 1998). Despite these efforts, the global population of displaced persons have risen from 1.2 million when it was first calculated in 1982 to 26 million in 2008 and 38 million by the end of 2014 (IDMC, 2015; UNHCR, 2010). In this paper, internally displaced persons (hereafter, IDPs) refers to individuals or group of individuals that have been forced to flee their homes, communities, or place of residence but still residing inside their country. According to Lindgren (2013), displacement violates social ecology of human organization, causes deprivation, increases risks of further violence, promotes social exclusion, and advances the emergence of psychological catch of dependency (cited in Semigina, 2015, p.4.). Being displaced means that victims have to leave their families behind or get separated along the way. Alone and dejected, they are faced with the harsh realities of physical, emotional, and social trauma when dealing with life's challenges.

Research have documented the harmful effects of displacement on the physical and mental health of victims' (Getanda, Papadopoulos, & Evans, 2015; Kim, 2007; Odusanya, 2016) and also, in the context of pre-existing social conditions, suggested that they have experienced a great deal of social misfortunes translating in poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment (Braumah, 2016). Furthermore, it has been shown that vulnerable groups such as women, children, and older adults, are disproportionately represented among this population (Akume, 2015), with women and children alone accounting for over 70% of this population (IDMC, 2016) and exposed to sexual and physical violence (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

As conveners of social justice and human rights, this situation poses legitimate concerns for social workers whose stated objectives are 'to enhance the social functioning of individuals, groups, and families [and] to address environmental influences that impact on the client systems' ability to address needs, insufficient resources and high risk-factors' (Timberlake, Zajicek- Faber, & Sabatino, 2008, p.5.). In keeping with this mandate, social workers have maintained a staunch commitment to displaced people, often bringing their experience and expertise to bear in addressing IDPs' needs (Cox & Pawar, 2006; Ramon and Maglajlic, 2012). Despite this, the literature on the nature of social work services to this population is very limited. An understanding of social work services is critical not only in enabling practitioners provide effective services to IDPs but also, in improving the image of the profession

especially in a context where social workers still contend with issues of non-professionalization.

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of social workers who are working with IDPs in Nigeria. Precisely, it aims to examine the nature of current social work services to IDPs and to discuss ways in which adequate services, if applicable, can be delivered.

NIGERIA: Country profile

Nigeria, with a population of approximately 184 million people, is located in the western part of sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 47% of West Africa's inhabitants, and clearly the largest population in the continent (World Bank, 2017). With an abundance of natural and human resources, Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$375.8 billion (World Bank, 2017). In contrast to its impressive economic indices, the country's human development indices have been hugely disappointing. With respect to poverty, for instance, official report indicates that more than half of the population live in extreme poverty, an increase from about 39 million in 1992 to over 112 million people in 2010 (NBS 2012). However, poverty in Nigeria varies across the country's two regional bloc with the predominantly Muslim north (having as much as 81% of the population in poverty) surpassing the level of poverty in the predominantly Christian south (standing at about 34% of the population) (NBS, 2012). Nigeria is also a diverse country with over 374 ethnic nationalities based on a conservative estimation (Otite, 1990). Since gaining independence from Britain in 1960, the country has been beset with decades of military rule combined with corrupt political class which, invariably, has resulted in the denial of access to basic social infrastructures and welfare services to millions of citizens.

IDPs in NIGERIA: Causes, prevalence, and response

Prior to insurgency in northern Nigeria, displacement in the country have been triggered by incessant torrential rainstorms, flashfloods, ethno-religious violence, militancy, and state sanctioned demolitions of "illegal" structures, cutting across Nigeria's six geo-political zones. In these situations, displacement occurred at a minimal level in terms of figures and groups hurt. However, following the thick of insurgency that began over a decade ago, displacement has happened on a humongous scale and has taken a devastating toll on vulnerable groups. In other words, the wave of insurgency in the country has continued to account for the upsurge in the numbers of IDPs in Nigeria, sparking a humanitarian crisis.

The International Displacement Monitoring Council (IDMC) reports that over 3 million people have been displaced in Nigeria (IDMC, 2016), thereby, ranking the country as having the highest population of IDPs in Africa (Premium Times, 2014). Although local authorities such as the National Emergency Management Agency

(NEMA) have, to a reasonable degree, assume certain responsibilities for displaced persons, in terms of providing temporary shelters and facilitating aids delivery, more calls, however, have been made by the Nigerian political leadership urging for additional support from the organized private sector (including non-government organizations, for-profit organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based organization etc.), with reference to the deployment of helping professionals to camps where this people are sheltered. Today, in response to such calls, many independent humanitarian organizations within and outside the shores of the country, have been active on ground level in providing support services to IDPs. As an advantage in conducting various tasks, these organizations utilize the services of helping professionals such as healthcare workers, psychiatrists, social workers, among others.

Literature Review

The literature on social work services to displaced persons, as noted earlier, is very limited. Consequently, the two studies that have investigated this subject matter in Nigeria will be reviewed alongside one study conducted in Ukraine.

The first study was conducted in southern Nigeria involving 25 organizations (20 nongovernment organizations and 5 government agencies) and 55 IDPs (Enwereji, 2009). These organizations were committed to providing support services to displaced persons, albeit it was not specified whether these organizations utilized the services of social workers. Using a mixed methods approach, the researcher found that services rendered to IDPs were inadequate, in that intervention efforts overly concentrated on addressing the immediate needs of displaced persons with no focus on addressing the long-term needs or societal issues expressed by IDPs. Although Enwereji (2009) did not indicate whether or not needs assessments were carried out before interventions were made, it was found that in-kind items such as food and clothing which were provided on ad-hoc basis dominated the services rendered to IDPs. Moreover, the researcher, while noting the significance of psychosocial services in offsetting the trauma experience of displaced persons, found that the delivery of such service was fragmented, in which case, 3 (12%) of the organizations surveyed reportedly offered.

The second study was conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in northern Nigeria and surveyed 35 state and non-state humanitarian organizations (ICRC, 2016). Findings revealed that IDPs received fairly adequate humanitarian assistance such as food and clothing but that in relation to rendering psychosocial services there were 'significant gap' despite overwhelming complaints of mental health problems by displaced persons (ICRC, 2016, p.44).

Semigina (2015) conducted a study involving 10 social workers who were drawn from 10 organizations (2 public and 8 private) providing services to displaced persons in Ukraine. Using a mixed method approach based on a rapid assessment technique, the author found that social work services were lopsided and insufficient as intervention

efforts were mainly oriented to therapeutic treatment and/or crisis intervention. She concluded that social work services ‘lack[ed] systematic approaches... [since] they are not empowering strategies but passive tactics of meeting basic needs’ (p.10).

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the ecological model was utilized to guide the theoretical framework. The underlying tenets of the ecological model are based on the notion of mutual reciprocity or exchanges that exists between people and their physical or social environment (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). According to this model, to effectively respond to a complex trouble situation like displacement and its accompanying fall-out, interventions should be aimed at meeting displaced persons’ needs from a personal, individual or micro level on the one hand, while the environmental, structural or macro influences that could undermine the effectiveness of such intervention strategies are addressed on the other hand. Put simply, the ecological model underscores a holistic approach to problem-solving and abhors intervention strategies that are lopsided.

The ecological model is consistent with the person-in-environment perspective of the social work profession, with renewed focus on the environmental or macro realm gaining traction in recent times. This is evident in the National Association of Social Work *Code of Ethics* which charges social workers to ‘promote the general welfare of society...and the development of people, their communities, and their environments. Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfilment of basic human needs and... the realization of social justice’ (NASW, 2008, sec. 6.01, p.26-27). This focus is also conspicuous in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards document of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) which articulates that ‘social work’s purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of condition that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the advancement of the quality of life for all persons’ (CSWE, 2008, p.1). As Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (1998) note, macro activities extends beyond individual interventions but are often based on needs, problems, issues, and concerns identified in the course of working one-on-one with service-users.

Method

Sample and procedure

The participants in this study are social workers who are providing services to displaced persons. Purposive sampling was used to identify and recruit social workers who were located in the full range of settings for displaced persons in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These social workers are spread across the four official shelters or camps for displaced persons in Abuja, namely: Lugbe, Area One, New Kuchingoro, and Kuje. Participation in the study was voluntary and all the social workers gave their informed consent to be interviewed after the purpose of the study

was spelt out. A one year working experience with IDPs and a minimum of a Bachelor of Science (B.sc) qualification in social work were criteria for inclusion in the study. These social workers were from diverse backgrounds and included 11 females and 4 males. Among these social workers, 12 were working in nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and 3 were working in government ministries.

Data collection and analysis

This study employed a qualitative research design to better understand the subjective experiences of social workers who are providing services to displaced persons in Nigeria (Creswell, 2014). Given the limited literature, an exploratory-descriptive strategy was utilized for this study (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). A semi-structured interview schedule based on a one-on-one interviews with the participants served as the primary means of data collection (Neuman, 2011). Prior to the commencement of the study, an interview was pilot-tested with one social worker who clarified that the questions were not ambiguous and, thus, did not require any modification. During the interview, the participants were requested to reflect on and respond to the main question: what kind of services do you provide to IDPs? This question was followed by four questions:

1. How relevant are social work services to IDPs?
2. How would you describe your experience in working with this people?
3. What barriers have you encountered while providing services to this people?
4. What can social workers do to make a great difference in the lives of this people?

Guided by the principle of data saturation (Bowen, 2008), twelve interviews which lasted 25 to 40 minutes were conducted resulting in the cancellation of the outstanding three since the interviews began yielding repetitive data.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participating social workers and the process of thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze data from the interviews. The data analysis' procedure followed the steps recommended by Terre et al. (2006); (a) familiarization and immersion, (b) inducing theme, (c) coding, (d) elaboration, and (e) interpretation and checking. To ensure validity of the qualitative data, Maxwell's five validity categorization in qualitative research was used (Maxwell, 2008). Descriptive validity was based on an attempt to accurately describe the data by means of transcripts of verbatim responses. In this regard, no information was left out or altered and the use of an integrated independent coder also contributed to descriptive validity. Interpretive validity was ensured by the use of the transcript that included both the verbal and non-verbal data to justify interpretations. To ensure theoretical validity, a literature control was done once the themes and sub-themes were identified through data analysis. The use of purposive sampling technique and the thorough description of the implementation of the research methodology ensured transferability of the findings to other applicable contexts.

Evaluative validity was achieved by ensuring that the evaluation was based on the findings that emanated from the process of data analysis. In show of appreciation for their willingness to participate in the study, the participants were provided with some refreshments before the interviews commenced.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues addressed in this study were informed consent, privacy, and protection from harm (Graziano & Raulin, 2007). As such, identifying details of the participants and their organizations were concealed. To this end, when quotes from the interviews are used in this paper, the participants are identified by their professional designation and gender.

Results

Five major themes emerged in the data: (1) social work as a relevant support system, (2) nature of current services, (3) challenges encountered when working with displaced persons, (4) impediments to effective service delivery, and (5) perceptions of what future services should entail. They will be discussed below and conveyed through verbatim quotes and a literature control.

Theme 1: Social work service as a relevant support system

Social workers' views regarding their professional role, to significant degrees, influence their self-esteem which, in turn, shapes the nature of the services they provide and how much these services are effective. The participating social workers viewed their services as absolutely crucial to stabilizing and supporting displaced persons.

Subtheme 1.1: Profoundly crucial

In relation to the relevance of their services to supporting displaced persons, the participants mentioned that their expertise and experience combined with their unalloyed commitment to IDPs signified that their services were crucial to assisting displaced people:

It is difficult to imagine what will happen if we don't provide the kinds of services we do. Getting our friends [displaced persons] back on their feet is our primary task... so, on this note, what we bring to the table is highly crucial to their well-being. (Social worker, Female).

I think they will be in the best position to tell whether what we do for them is significant or not. But to those who have eyes, there is no doubting what we do... even the government begs us to continue assisting our friends when others [helping professionals] back out... our service is important that is why they will do that, is it not. (Social worker, Male).

Comments by the participants support the literature affirming social work as a useful support system (Avenirsocial, 2014; Bisman, 2004; Putnam, 2002). Building on the concept of social capital, Bisman (2004) noted that social work services are not only for individual benefits but for group and community benefits especially in context where needed support systems are absent. Such scenario vividly portrays the experiences of displaced persons in view of their lost social capital. The basic idea of social capital is that family, friends and other members of a person's social network constitute an importance source of resources that can provide material aid, opportunities for social participation and enjoyment and support in crisis situation (Woolcook & Narayan, 2000). These are the responsibilities social workers have selflessly assume in the course of working with displaced persons.

The profession's principles of social justice and human rights were equally cited as a yardstick for their relevance. One participant notes:

Can we pride ourselves as social change agents if we ignore for one moment the gross abuse that is going on around here? Actions that impact negatively on human rights is frowned upon by all social workers and so, by virtue of social justice, we do what we can to make sure that such things do not happen again. (Social worker, Female)

This finding is consistent with the principles of human rights and social justice which basically represent the fundamental values guiding the professionals to act to improve social conditions and human lives (IFSW & IASSW, 2012).

Theme 2: Nature of current services

In a helping context, understanding the service that are offered to targeted audience are instrumental for evaluative purposes with a view to either maintaining the status quo or making necessary adjustments for enhanced services. All the participants described their current services as comprising three components: (a) conducting needs assessment, (b) coordinating the delivery of support services, and (c) providing counselling services.

Subtheme 2.1: Needs assessment

The participants noted that needs assessment takes the center stage in the helping process as it enabled them to deliver appropriate services to displaced persons, as one participant puts:

None of us begins with our work without first conducting needs assessment of our friends. It does not make any sense to just go about imposing services on people without first trying to know what they truly want... you know; it can be humiliating to assume that all people want is food and money and because of that one can lose the trust of person allotted to her or him. (Social worker, Female).

This finding corresponds with the long-held importance accorded to needs assessment in professional literature (Milner, Myers, & O'Byrne, 2015). As Walker and Beckett (2003) notes, 'assessment is the foundation of the social work process with service users' (p.6). In conducting needs assessment, Hepworth and Jean (2006) commented that social workers should be informed about cultural norms, acculturation, and language differences including the ability to differentiate between individual and culturally linked attributes, the initiative to seek out needed information so that evaluations are not biased and services culturally appropriate, and an understanding of the ways that cultural differences may reveal themselves in the assessment process. This entails that social workers recognize that since external problems become internal, and the internal affects the external, looking at just the social aspects will prove inadequate, just as looking at just the psychological aspect is inadequate (Milner, Myers, & O'Byrne, 2015). They then identified five stage processes in needs assessment which include: (1) preparing for the task, (2) collecting data from the service user, (3) applying professional knowledge gained from experience and theory, (4) making judgment based on the best standards of care to be delivered, and (5) deciding what should be done.

Subtheme 2.2: Coordinating the delivery of support services

Participants added that another aspect of their job description was their involvement in the coordination of deliveries or support services to displaced people:

A lot of humanitarian organizations come here to provide relief materials... so, our job is to make sure that these resources get to our brothers and sisters [IDPs] before magic happens. We all know the kind of country we are, so, we don't want stories that touch. (Social worker, Male).

This finding corroborates prior research which affirms that the responsibility of the social worker is to typically assist service users gain access to needed and entitled services by identifying service needs and potential providers, thereby, serving as the bridge between multiple service organizations (Bruder, 2005; Bunger, 2010).

Subtheme 2.3: Conducting counselling

The participants concluded the description of their services by underlining the critical influence of counselling to the healing process. One social worker remarks:

Our work must include counselling, so, we provide counselling on a regular basis. Because of the horrors they have experienced, they feel a lot better when we counsel them around the importance of hope and resilience. In fact, they love this... when we try to nullify their fears and struggles by letting them know that displacement is just a temporary setback that they are capable of overcoming. (Social worker, Female).

Counselling is a critical skill for all social workers. According to Seden (2005), counselling skills underpin and can permeate all key social work activities from

assessing, planning, and advocating to working in organizations and developing competence to practice. In social work, much like other helping professions, counselling is aimed at assisting service users to achieved desired change in line with the stated goals of the working relationship (Miller, 2012; Seden, 2005).

Theme 3: Challenges encountered in working with IDPs

Encountering challenges are reasonably expected outcomes in any complex problem-solving situations and this is particularly so for social workers since they often go the extra mile to bring relief to underserved and marginalized people. All the social workers interviewed mentioned physical and emotional exhaustion as well as language and religious differences as the major barriers they encountered when working with displaced persons.

Subtheme 3.1: Burnout

All the participants discussed that they frequently struggled with physical and emotional exhaustion when working with displaced persons. High caseloads in addition to the deplorable living conditions of displaced persons seemed to have acted as triggers:

You know, we always put up smiles when we are working with them but, deep inside of us, we are burning. We do this because we don't want to give them the impression that we are worried because that can affect them too. It is really difficult to stay compose when you experience the kind of deplorable living conditions our people are subjected to and you wish you can just wipe it all off with a wand yet you cannot. Their condition is just plain distressing. (Social worker, Female).

Burnout is a commonly experienced phenomenon among social workers. This finding corroborates previous research which has shown that toxic working environment, depersonalization and feelings of inadequacy increases the possibility of burnout (Dillenburger, 2004; Storey & Billingham, 2001). Given the prevailing situation, social workers must find healthy ways to deal with this obnoxious experience. Continual self-care have been suggested as a way in which professionals can surmount exhaustion (Storey & Billingham, 2001).

Subtheme 3.2: Cultural and religious differences

Cultural and language barrier as well as religious differences was highlighted by the participants as another forms of difficulty they constantly have to grapple with in the course of their work. A social worker remarks:

[Language]... is a major stumbling block we encounter when working with our friends. Do you know that many of them cannot even speak Pidgin English except only Hausa. So, camp authorities usually hire interpreters during counselling sessions and, here, we usually conduct group counselling in order to reduce costs. At other times,

there is the sense of mistrust when certain words are said that seems to go against their beliefs. (Social worker, Male).

This finding corroborates the observation of Harrison (2007) who asserted that language barrier makes it demanding to form a candid and trusting relationship with service users. To offset such barrier, cultural competency have been amplified as alternative route in the literature (Lui, 2013). Cultural competence does not mean that social workers become proficient in their service-users' language, albeit this could be desirable, what it does connote is that practitioners demonstrate appreciation for, understanding of, and sensitivity to their service-users' beliefs, norms, and values without imposing their own values on them (Liu, 2013).

Theme 4: Barriers to effective service delivery

In any relational context, providing effective and efficient services to service users by service providers could be determined by personal or environmental factors or both, which ultimately define the effectiveness of services provided. Given this possibility, all the participants commented that external influences were the main factors undermining effective service delivery to displaced people. In this regard, they identified insufficient organizational resources, lack of interagency cooperation, poor recognition and reward system, and the non-legalization of the social work profession as impediments to effective service delivery.

Subtheme 4.1: Insufficient organizational resources

Insufficient resources within organizations were described by the participants as impediments to service delivery. One social worker explains:

Funding is a big challenge since everybody is complaining about Buhari economy... agencies don't have many resources like in the past. You know, many politicians usually come to supply resources to our agencies before elections, but when elections are over, you don't see them again until another election year. In some cases, the government also supports agencies with some funds to help them provide resources for people, yet, we don't see any difference on ground because what the government claim to give is different from what we see here. (Social worker, Male).

This finding seems to support the argument that since social workers are not fully autonomous decision makers in their organizational and institutional settings, their service impact would be limited due to a complicated web of relationships, policies, and laws (Johns, 2006). The current turbulent wave of economic austerity occasioned by the fundamental change processes of neoliberal politics and marketization have meant that many organizations have suffered cuts in funding, resulting in social services operating at a suboptimal level (Rogowski, 2012).

Subtheme 4.2: Lack of interagency cooperation

A know-it-all syndrome by some organizations was described by the participating social workers as impeding effective service delivery. This syndrome was expressed to connote lack of cooperation among organizations:

Interventions will suffer when agencies believed they have absolute knowledge and they are not willing to share ideas with agencies or even partner with them... it looks as if they are competing with each other and the public will not know this except you are on ground to witness what I am saying... when such toxic competition exist, how can services still become effective. (Social worker, Female).

The literature has aptly demonstrated that multi-agency partnership does not only ensure the delivery of effective services to service users but that it is also rewarding and stimulating for professionals, as it provides them a great deal of understanding of intervention strategies of other organizations (Moran et al., 2006; Woolbridge et al., 2001).

Subtheme 4.3: Poor recognition and reward

The participating social workers vehemently proclaimed that services would not be effective in a setting where service providers are poorly rewarded. One participant puts it:

Sometimes, I wonder whether many of these agencies are genuinely interested in helping our people [displaced persons] like they claim... agency's management know that we are the backbone of the agency, yet, they hardly show us any reward or motivation with incentives despite the sacrifices we make... while they sit most times in the comfort of their office. (Social worker, Female).

Studies have shown that social workers who derived job satisfaction from their occupation are likely to be more committed and provide higher quality services to their service users than those who are dissatisfied (Acker, 1999; Balloch, Pahl, & McLeon, 1998). Satisfied workers, according to Bussing (1999), are those who feel that they have sufficient opportunities for professional development, proper guidance, and a proper reward system. However, in an unjust organizational environment, 'social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians, and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or whether distribution of resources, policies, and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful' (IFSW & IASSW, 2012, sec. 4.2.4) to them or their client systems.

Subtheme 4.4: Non-legalization of the profession

A profession's legal status promotes the impetus for prestige among other professions and recognition from employers and employing organizations. The participants maintained that the non-legalization of the social work profession has limited their potential to provide quality services. One participant elucidates:

This is one thorny issue that we cannot overemphasize. How can we be honestly happy when we know that the power that we enable us deliver a great job is denied us. We provide services to our friends because we are genuinely passionate about them, but more would have been done have we been professionalized. We are very certain of this and let me even tell you this, do you know because of this legalization issue, many other professions and even our agencies don't show us more respect like others. The strange thing is that the government knows how important we are but they keep delaying to legalize our profession. Do you know when social problems erupt, for example, us [social workers], Doctors, and Security personnel are the first to be called before any other professionals yet they keep withdrawing from professionalizing our work. (Social worker, Male).

This finding is consistent with the existing literature in Nigeria which proclaimed that the non-legalization of the social work profession has presented a great deal of unimaginable challenges to practitioners in their quest to providing effective services to service-users (Idyorough, 2013; Okoye, 2013).

Theme 5: Thoughts on future services

What social service providers perceive as their role in any context may invariably influence their practice in that direction in the near future. All the participants noted that they would like to see a future in which they could work collaboratively with other professionals, that is, in a multi-disciplinary team. Furthermore, the participants were of the view that without involving in policy advocacy and political action, their efforts may not yield any tangible results. Thus, they envisaged a future in which social workers would be active in the policy arena.

Subtheme 5.1: Working as part of a multi-disciplinary team

Participants in this study felt that services could offer more benefits to displaced persons if their organizations followed a multidisciplinary approach to work. A social worker claims:

We will like to see a situation where the prevailing know-it-all attitude of agencies give way for a knowledge sharing relationship between agencies and professionals... where there is collaboration and team spirit from and among agencies and professionals, our people [IDPs] will enjoy better services. (Social worker, Female).

This finding is congruent with the literature which asserts that social workers appreciates well facilitated multidisciplinary team work in which the voices and contributions of all collaborating professionals are valued (Gilles, 2016). Inter-disciplinary collaboration is 'an effective interpersonal process that facilitates the achievement of goals that cannot be reached when individual professionals act on their own' (Brunner, 1991, cited in Bronstein, 2003, p.299).

Subtheme 5.2: Engaging in policy advocacy and political action

Without mentioning whether or not their current services were adequate, all the participants expressed the view that alternative strategies were needed to compliment current services if displaced persons were to truly recover. For them, recovery meant that IDPs are able to socially, economically and politically function again in the society. One way they believed this could be accomplished was through engaging in political action and/or policy advocacy. As one participant clarifies:

It is not as if we do not know the extent to which our services can go... but if we really want to make them recover in the long run and because our government is very stubborn then there is the need to be active in the policy or political matter. (Social worker, Male).

While this suggestion seemed heartening, there were reservations and doubts by other participants as to whether or not policy advocacy and political action was within the domain of the social work profession:

... I am not saying this is what we should do...I mean this is what should be done by agencies or other professional bodies because, right now, this [policy advocacy] is beyond us... our training did not inform us about this as we were trained to deal with social problems on a case-by-case basis... This is just not our area of focus. (Social worker, Female).

Engaging in policy advocacy and political action is well within the purview of the social work profession in which all social workers are obliged to execute. For instance, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) ethically mandates social workers to ‘engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources... they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully’ (NASW, 2008, p.27). The *Code of Ethics* continues: ‘social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions’ (NASW, 2008, p.27).

Limitations of the study

This study has two main limitations. The first limitation stems from the non-inclusion of the perceptions of IDPs regarding the services provided to them by social workers. Doing so would have provided more insights into what service users think of social work services thereby helping social workers to identify an area that needs improvements. It is therefore recommended that future research that includes the voices of displaced persons be conducted. The second limitation is the initial reluctance of social workers to participate in the study, leading to several logistical constraints and delays. At the outset, social workers were skeptical because they felt their perceptions were not relevant given that previous studies that have been done in these settings were focused on administrators of organizations and other helping professionals. Thus, they were assured that their voices and contributions would be heard. These limitations

notwithstanding, this study has contributed to the very limited literature on social work and displaced persons.

Discussion

Findings of this study, similar to others confirm that the services rendered to IDPs by social workers are lopsided and inadequate (Enwereji, 2009; ICRC, 2016; Semigina, 2015). The long standing predominance of the remedial model in social work education in Nigeria, as shown in this study, has influenced social work service direction. However, since the last 10 years, following fervent calls by some (e.g. Anucha, 2008), schools of social work in the country have now adopted a generalist approach to professional education with a particular emphasis on the social environment with the *person-in-environment* frame. About five years ago, many of these schools have begun producing new generation of social workers who are grounded and embracing this philosophy.

To ensure the recovery of IDPs, social work services must take into consideration the interconnections between people and their environment and only in so doing can the immediate and long-term needs and concerns of displaced persons be met.

Implications for social work practice

Although there are no clear lists of social work procedures, interventions or strategies for working with displaced people, several international documents does offer some practical suggestions in working with displaced persons (e.g. UN, 1992; UN, 1999; UN, 2004). Taken together, suggestions in these documents urged service providers to aim their programs at enabling displaced persons to overcome dependence on humanitarian assistance, regain and sustain their productive capacity, rebuild their sociocultural and community structures, and to rebuild their individual and collective ability to contribute positively to national development. More recently, Semigina (2015) identified four realms of focus for social workers if they are to make meaningful impact in the lives of displaced people. For Her, social work interventions should address: (1) the prevailing conditions of displaced persons which should include advocacy programs, outreach programs, humanitarian aid programs, health programs, and programs designed to minimize existing situations., (2) past experiences of displaced persons by providing trauma counseling programs, rehabilitation programs, support programs, and social and recreational programs., (3) needs pertaining to group situations, comprising self-help programs, community-building programs, and community relations programs., (4) the future needs of IDPs which entails developing education programs, facilitating skills development and capacity building programs, and income-generation programs. While these suggestions may seem daunting and even confusing, Cox and Pawar (2006) proclaimed that ‘it is not being suggested that all programs are equally applicable to all contexts or always able to be implemented in an

identical manner' (p.292) but that all of them should be considered in the context of displacement (Semigina, 2015). However, in its adopted policy paper "Displaced Persons", the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), stated that while these range of suggestions could prove helpful to the recovery of displaced persons, such solutions could only be actualized in an environment in which accountable political leadership exist (IFSW, 2012). Given the dearth of political will in Nigeria, utilizing an advocacy intervention strategy combined with the capability perspective may prove decisive.

Employing integrated capabilities perspective and advocacy intervention

The capabilities perspective offers a viable alternative for framing potential response to displaced persons as this fits with the ecological model (Morris, 2002). From these perspectives, social work services may be designed to promote the development of the internal self-functioning of IDPs as well as effecting change on their social environment, thus, maximizing their well-being. The capabilities perspective of distributive justice contends that individuals have competencies and knowledge that empowers them to be resilient and thrive in challenging situations (Morris, 2002). Implicitly, the core values are in close alignment with the advocacy intervention model that has been proven to be effective in scholarly literature (Jansson, 2010). In advocacy intervention, the capability of self-determination and the right of every person to shape their own life course are critical as each person defines the assistance that s/he needs. Through advocacy intervention, a social worker who is paired with a displaced woman, for instance, may personally advocate for her when it is perceived that the woman's material, legal or social support needs are deficient in an empowering way. Thus, providing 'the resources and power to exercise self-determination to achieve well-being' (Morris, 2002, p.368).

In this study, the need for an advocacy intervention was revealed in several ways and such intervention is useful at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. To begin with, given that the formal support systems are presently not effective, social workers, in acting as service brokers, could help displaced persons navigate such systems to ensure access to resources that may be needed. In cases of sexual violence many victims do not know how to seek for medical reports that may be required by the courts for prosecution. In this context, social workers in health settings could inform victims of their rights and initiate moves to ensure that medical certificates are issued. Moreover, going to the police station or the courts could be particularly daunting in light of their current predicament and even intimidating given that many victims may not be aware of their rights. Thus, social workers could play an enabler and support role to accompany such persons. In the event that resources are lacking to have such intensive intervention with each case, alternatives such as providing detailed information about resources and the location of such resources, offering some role play as well as partnering with

organizations that offer legal aid could be helpful. Attention to displaced children should also be prioritized. In this sense, social workers could develop a variety of services for these children during and after school hours to address the short- and long-term effect of displacement. In cases where education facilities are unavailable, social workers could advocate for schools to be set up and ensure that affected children are enrolled.

Furthermore, social workers may advocate on behalf of displaced persons to other service providers (e.g. law enforcement agencies, legal professionals etc.) to develop proper interventions. They could collaborate with other professionals and organizations to create and implement well defined protocols to strengthen existing formal support services. Providing adequate training and coordination for formal support service providers to understand the complexity of displacement and its devastating impact could be appropriate. Also, social workers with group work and community development skills could facilitate inter-agency partnership between government and non-government organizations to enhance responsive and coordinated community approaches to the needs of IDPs.

At a certain point, some displaced persons would express the desire to return to their original communities and often without competitive skills, their recovery could be hampered. Thus, they need a variety of support services to ensure a sustainable livelihood. There is evidence that interventions that address the skills development of displaced persons are critical if solutions to displacement are to become sustainable (Harild & Christensen, 2010). In this regard, social workers through a collaborative endeavor could develop employment-skills training as well as facilitate community development initiatives (such as micro-enterprise) such that if IDPs decide to return home or integrate elsewhere, they would become self-reliant.

Given ample empirical evidence about the influence of public opinion in shaping policy direction (Burstein, 1998; Page & Shapiro), social workers, as educators and social justice advocates, could inform the public about lapses in existing policies relating to displaced persons by expanding on the imperative of ensuring reviews where applicable. By garnering public support through means of public sensitization or enlightenment workshops policy makers may become more inclined for policy changes that would be proactive and ultimately beneficial to IDPs. However, in a more challenging terrain like Nigeria, constituents hold the key in deciding who their next lawmakers would be. In this context, social workers could move the enlightenment campaign to this stronghold, urging the people and community leaders for their support and charging them to hold their representatives accountable if the right policies are not initiated. Along with this strategy, social workers could also play a leadership role in lobbying legislators for policy changes. Attaining significant success in the policy arena requires a united front among social work professionals (educators, researchers, and practitioners). Given their extensive knowledge, social work researchers and academics

can speak about policy limitations to both local and national audience by substantiating their argument with references to the constitution which allows for review of ineffective policies. Also, they may add flexibility to these debates by canvassing for policies that would prevent displacements from becoming a humanitarian crisis, and that would ensure the protection of and provision for displaced persons, as well as assuring the long-term recovery and resettlement of these persons in their home communities or wherever they choose to live. Such discussions should be framed in such a way that recognizes that the ultimate responsibility of IDPs lies with the State and that by demonstrating political will and/or providing accountable leadership the recovery of displaced people could be secured.

Social workers should also recognize the importance of spirituality to the healing process and that, when sought, its application be done in a culturally appropriate way so as to foster trust. Research has shown that understanding service-user's spirituality may have beneficial effects on service outcomes between service providers and users (Unterrainer, Lewis, & Fink, 2014). Liaising with spiritual (church or mosque) leaders and traditional rulers may be one way to be knowledgeable and effective in this instance. Remarkably, many of these leaders occupy discernable positions or are patrons in many faith-based and civil society organizations.

Recommendations

Given the magnitude of populations affected by displacement and the dearth of literature on the subject, it is recommended that future research be conducted and that such study should include the voices and thoughts of displaced persons. More than this, research that includes the monitoring and evaluation of support services to affected persons should be carried out. Research that also focuses on the impact of social work services to overall well-being of displaced persons should also be considered.

More importantly, the Nigerian government must rise above parochial thoughts by (a) expediting action necessary for the professionalization of social work in Nigeria since the current stalemate will not bode well for the millions of vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved citizens in the country, and (b) demonstrating unflinching commitment to displaced people by taking drastic measures in ensuring that the prevailing deficit of social workers in public institutions are addressed through the employment of professionally trained social workers.

Conclusion

This study offers a unique contribution to understanding the nature of social work services to displaced people in Nigeria. Drawing on a socioecological framework, it offers insights into the environmental factors undermining the delivery of effective services to displaced persons and offers a much broader array of options for future interventions. This study is one of the very few studies conducting in-depth interviews

with social workers who work with displaced people in Nigeria and provides direction for desired improvements in services to IDPs. Taken together, an ecological model with the infusion of capability building perspective and advocacy interventions would enable social workers to work as a counsellor, referral, case coordinator, service broker, educator, facilitator, resource mobilizer, lobbyist, and enabler to advocate changes at the micro and macro level for the overall betterment of the social conditions of IDPs in Nigeria.

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СОЦІАЛЬНІ ПОСЛУГИ ДЛЯ ВНУТРІШНО ПЕРЕМІЩЕНИХ ОСІБ: ОГЛЯД ЯКІСНОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ В НІГЕРІЇ

Соломон Адамаус, кафедра соціальної роботи, Університет Беніну, Бенін, штат Едо, Нігерія, amadasun.s@yahoo.com

***Анотація.** Впродовж останніх трьох десятиліть зусилля світової спільноти спрямовуються на підвищення обізнаності з явищем внутрішнього переміщення; створення міжнародно-правової бази, яка б захищала переселенців від подальшої шкоди; впровадження проактивних заходів щодо мінімізації негативних наслідків переміщення у тому числі й через надання соціальних послуг. Для вирішення проблем та покращення становища внутрішньо переміщених осіб важливе значення має розуміння того, які соціальні послуги є необхідними. Ефективне та якісне надання послуг також може сприяти підвищенню іміджу професії соціальна робота, особливо в умовах, коли статус соціальних працівників у суспільстві досі залишається низьким. Мета дослідження полягала у вивченні характеру послуг, які надають соціальні працівники внутрішньо переміщеним особам (ВПО). Теоретичною основою дослідження послужила екологічна модель соціальної роботи, відповідно до якої важливим є цілісний підхід до вирішення проблем, виходячи із розуміння людини у контексті навколишнього середовища. Для досягнення мети дослідження було проведене якісне дослідження з використанням методу напівструктурованого інтерв'ю з 15 соціальними працівниками м. Абуджі, Нігерія. Його результати засвідчили, що соціальні послуги, які надаються, не сприяють задоволенню широкого кола потреб та вирішенню проблем внутрішньо переміщених осіб. Для задоволення оперативних та довготермінових потреб даної категорії клієнтів соціальні послуги повинні враховувати весь спектр їх потреб і потреб, бути орієнтованими на захист прав і свобод та розвиток власного потенціалу.*

***Ключові слова:** соціальна робота; внутрішньо-переміщені особи (ВПО); екологічна перспектива соціальної роботи; перспектива людина в навколишньому середовищі; адвокаційне втручання; Нігерія.*