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21 June 2011

NGA103715.E

Nigeria: Role and actions of government agencies that assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, particularly women (2009 - March 2011)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Both the Lagos-based *Daily Independent*, citing the Commissioner of the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), and the United States (US) State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009* indicate that there are approximately 80,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria (*Daily Independent* 22 June 2009; US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 2d). However, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) -- an international body established by the Norwegian Refugee Council to monitor conflict-induced internal displacement (IDMC n.d.) -- indicates, in its 2010 report on Nigeria, that due to the lack of a comprehensive survey, there are no "reliable" statistics on internal displacement (IDMC 3 Dec. 2010, 10). The IDMC report adds that statistics provided by governmental and non-governmental agencies are estimates that only include people who are in temporary camps and not those people who found shelter with family and friends (ibid.).

The IDMC report indicates that Nigeria has been affected by internal conflicts and "generalised violence" since 1999 (ibid., 7). As a result, the country has been dealing with the ongoing task of responding to a "fluctuating but always sizeable internally displaced population" (ibid.). The report explains that some of these conflicts are caused by "disputes over access to land, citizenship and broader questions of identity" (ibid.). Indigenous groups have reportedly "prevented settlers from owning land or businesses, or accessing jobs and education" (ibid.). Internal displacement in the country is also due to natural disasters, such as flooding and soil erosion (ibid., 10).

A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news article, reporting in January 2010 on violence between Muslims and Christians in the city of Jos -- a city located in the area referred to as Nigeria's Middle Belt --, indicates that 5,000 people fled to army barracks and public buildings for temporary shelter (20 Jan. 2010).

In October 2010, an Agence France-Presse (AFP) article, citing an Amnesty International (AI) report, indicated that more than 200,000 people were at risk of losing their homes due to a government "'urban renewal'" plan to tear down slums in the city of Port Harcourt (28 Oct. 2010). According to AI, the government had not yet come up with a resettlement plan to provide alternative accommodations for the "hundreds of thousands" of people that would be affected by the evictions (AI 28 Oct. 2010). AI also indicates that Njemanze, a waterfront settlement in Port Harcourt, was "demolished" as part of the urban renewal plan in August 2009 and that, out of the estimated 13,000 people that were evicted by force, "many" still had nowhere to live a year later (ibid.).

According to the IDMC report on Nigeria, the Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States -- known as the core of the southern Niger Delta region -- have dealt with "violent competition for land, political power and oil wealth" (3 Dec. 2010, 8). The report states that displacement in the Niger Delta region has been "closely linked" to oil production (ibid.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the African Center for Gender and Social Development (ACGSD) -- a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) program -- indicated that there is no policy or legal framework in place to oversee a comprehensive national response to the IDPs in Nigeria (UN 24 Mar. 2011). However, according to the Director, Nigeria signed the African Union (AU) IDP Convention in October 2009 (ibid.).

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention, "'covers all causes of displacement'," says a representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (qtd. in UN 27 Oct. 2009). He adds that the Convention "'is forceful in terms of responsibility and goes beyond addressing the roles of states to those of others like the [African Union] and non-state actors'" (ibid.).

According to a March 2011 press release by the African Union, 31 African Union Member states have signed the Kampala Convention, but only 7 Member States (Uganda, Sierra Leone, Chad, Zambia, Central African Republic, Somalia and Gabon) have ratified it (African Union 15 Mar. 2011). The Convention needs 15 ratifications for it to come into force (ibid.).

Government's role in assisting IDPs

The Director of the ACGSD indicated that the government responds to the IDPs in Nigeria at the local, state and federal levels (UN 24 Mar. 2011). This is corroborated in the IDMC report on Nigeria, which explains how local, state and federal governments intervene to assist the IDPs:

The national responsibility to respond to displacement lies with the local governments, and only if they are unable to cope are state governments called in. State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) exist in some states, but they have varying capacities. Only when this second level of response is ineffective does the state government appeal to the federal government for support. The President takes the final decision on whether the federal government intervenes. At the federal level, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) coordinates emergency relief operations and assists in the rehabilitation of victims where necessary. (IDMC 3 Dec. 2010, 97)

However, the IDMC report also indicates that although government organizations like NEMA attend to IDPs during the emergency phase, they do not have enough resources to help people who are displaced for longer periods of time or to help them reintegrate when they return (ibid.). Similarly, the Director of ACGSD also points out that although some emergency structures are put in place on the local government level, they are "often plagued by capacity challenges" (UN 24 Mar. 2011).

Both the Director of ACGSD and the IDMC report also list the NCFR as another government agency that attends to the IDPs in Nigeria (UN 24 Mar. 2011; IDMC 3 Dec. 2010, 97). The IDMC report says that the NCFR is responsible for post-emergency situations and long-term initiatives on a "de facto" basis (3 Dec. 2010, 97). The NCFR is also available to assist NEMA in managing camps and has a designated team that works with the IDPs; however, the report indicates that the NCFR does not have enough resources and lacks the structure to provide an "effective" response

(IDMC 3 Dec. 2010, 97). The ACGSD Director also said that non-government agencies end up providing emergency response support to government agencies:

The complex nature of management of IDPs, numbers and resource constraints often result in non government agencies playing a prominent role. For example, humanitarian organizations such as the Nigeria Red Cross are often critical in providing emergency support at the local level as a prelude to the intervention by local government structures. (UN 24 Mar. 2011)

Government's role in assisting internally displaced women

When asked whether the government was focusing on the issue of displaced women, the ACGSD director indicated that the organizations that respond to the IDPs in Nigeria are not "gender sensitive" and that the issue has received attention on an international level (UN 24 Mar. 2011). In reviewing Nigeria's sixth periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 2008, the Committee expressed its concern over the situation of internally displaced women, including

women with disabilities, displaced by violence and conflict, in particular in view of their precarious living conditions in camps where they are at increased risk of sexual and other forms of violence and lack access to health care, education and economic opportunities. (UN 8 July 2008, para. 340)

The Committee therefore requested the Nigerian government to adopt a national policy on displacement and also that it formulate and implement "gender-sensitive programs for social reintegration, capacity-building and training of internally displaced persons" (ibid., para. 341).

A January 2010 article by the AFP indicates that over 17 camps were set up for over 20,000 IDPs in the city of Jos -- the capital of central Plateau State in Nigeria -- and that over 30 women had given birth while there (28 Jan. 2010). The head of the Nigerian Red Cross is cited as saying that more pregnant women "were still in the camps in squalid conditions without proper antenatal care and good nutrition" (ibid.).

Further information on the government's role in assisting internally displaced women could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

NGOs assisting internally displaced persons

The IDMC report indicates that the Nigerian Red Cross (NRC) is the main humanitarian agency in the country with the capacity to respond on very short notice and that agency often acts to provide assistance before local governments (3 Dec. 2010, 97). However, the head of the NRC, interviewed for an Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) report on the efforts of relief agencies to help IDPs in makeshift camps around the city of Jos, stated that the capacity of NEMA and the NRC is "overstretched" (UN 27 Jan. 2010). At the same time, he said, the majority of the IDPs do not have adequate food, toilet facilities or safe drinking water (ibid.). He explained that a lack of communication between relief agencies is hindering their response to the crisis (ibid.).

Other organizations assisting IDPs in Nigeria include ActionAid and Médecins Sans Frontières (ibid.). The IDMC reports that "faith-based" organizations provide support to IDPs of their religion and that international organizations have also provided ad hoc assistance (3 Dec. 2010, 97).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response

is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: An Africa Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution and a representative of Women for Women International were unable to provide information for this Response. Attempts to contact representatives at the Alliances for Africa, BAOBAB for Women's Rights, the International Society for Social Justice and Good Governance, WomenAid Collective, Women Development International Agency, the National Commission for Refugees, the International Center for Research on Women, Justice in Nigeria Now, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, the Nigerian Red Cross, as well as the Canadian representative of the African Refugees Foundation and the First Secretary at the Nigeria High Commission in Ottawa, were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: ActionAid; *Africa Confidential*; *Africa Research Bulletin*; Africa Files; allAfrica.com; All West Africa; Brookings Institution; European Country of Origin Information Network; Factiva; Ghana-Nation.com; Human Rights Watch; International Center for Research on Women; International Crisis Group; Inter-University Committee on International Migration; Kabissa; Médecins Sans Frontières; *The Sun*; *The Times of Nigeria*; United Nations (UN) Refworld, ReliefWeb; University of Minnesota Human Rights Library; USAfrica Online; Women News Network.

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