

THE INVISIBLE DISPLACED: IMPLICATIONS OF THE BASTARDISED/ MISCONSTRUED CONCEPTUALISATION OF POPULATION DISPLACEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement is the only global legal document for the protection of internally displaced persons. The document examined the extent to which internally displaced persons receive adequate covering under international laws; provides protection and assistance to displaced persons during displacement as well as establishes platforms for their durable returns and reintegration back into the society. It places primary responsibility of caring for this group on national governments. The document established that displaced persons are persons that have been forcefully moved from their places of abode for reasons attributed to 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. This shows that IDPs have the right to relocate to any safer location within the same country where they were displaced. It uses the mixed method of data collection and analysis which incorporates empirical evidences from field survey in selected informal internally displaced persons settlements in Nigeria and key informant interviews combined with secondary data. This paper argues that for various reasons ranging from lack of trust for persons that have identified themselves with the status of displacement, to the lack of effective mechanisms to identify displaced persons, to the lack of adequate capacity and resources to manage internally displaced people amongst others, national humanitarian actors and agencies within Nigeria have chosen to redefine the global notion of internal displacement to flight within a given geographical space not far from the place of displacement rather than anywhere else within a national boundary as

stipulated in the Guiding Principle which has had detrimental to the plights of displaced persons. Most importantly, it has denied them their right of visibility and access to government intervention. This study therefore recommends amongst others the needs for Nigeria to ensure compliance with the meaning of internal displacement as stipulated in the guiding principle on internal displacement so that the rights and human dignity of displaced persons that are not within formal IDP camps can be protected and respected.

Keywords: Displacement, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), IDP Camps, Invisible Displaced, Human Rights

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