




## Article

# Economic Drivers of Voluntary Return among Conflict-Induced Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

Paul O. Adekola <sup>1,2,3</sup> , Dominic E. Azuh <sup>1,3</sup>, Emmanuel O. Amoo <sup>1,3</sup> , Gracie Brownell <sup>4</sup>  
and Giuseppe T. Cirella <sup>5,\*</sup> 

- <sup>1</sup> Demography and Social Statistics Programme, Department of Economics and Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota 112212, Nigeria; paul.adekola@covenantuniversity.edu.ng (P.O.A.); dominic.azuh@covenantuniversity.edu.ng (D.E.A.); emma.amoo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng (E.O.A.)
- <sup>2</sup> Research Centre for Anthropology and Health, Human Biology, Health and Society Unit, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Coimbra, 3000-370 Coimbra, Portugal
- <sup>3</sup> Centre for Economic Policy and Development Research, Covenant University, Ota 112212, Nigeria
- <sup>4</sup> Department of Social Work, Texas A&M University, Commerce, TX 77843, USA; gracie.brownell@tamuc.edu
- <sup>5</sup> Faculty of Economics, University of Gdansk, 81-824 Sopot, Poland
- \* Correspondence: gt.cirella@ug.edu.pl; Tel.: +48-585231258

**Abstract:** North-East Nigeria is recovering from a decade of terrorism by Boko Haram during which the region collapsed socioeconomically and millions were displaced. The displaced live in various camps in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States, and serve as the primary source of data for this research. The Nigerian government has expressed their desire for the displaced to return home following peace restoration to the region. Their unwillingness to return despite the perceived gains of reintegration prompted this research to examine economic determinants of willingness for reintegration. Logistics regression results show a strong positive influence of having an assurance of finding employment back home on the willingness for reintegration. The results further suggest that displaced persons are 14 times more willing to return home when the government guarantees employment. To encourage willingness for reintegration, the authors recommend that displaced persons be empowered economically through the provision of jobs upon their return to their various home communities. Recommendations for the Nigerian government and interested parties are presented with suggestions to expand social institutions and their collaboration with the government.

**Keywords:** displaced persons; socioeconomics; government; return; unwillingness; reintegration; Boko Haram; North-East Nigeria



**Citation:** Adekola, P.O.; Azuh, D.E.; Amoo, E.O.; Brownell, G.; Cirella, G.T. Economic Drivers of Voluntary Return among Conflict-Induced Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 2060. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14042060>

Academic Editor: Michael A. Long

Received: 30 December 2021

Accepted: 9 February 2022

Published: 11 February 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

One of the causes of population displacement is terrorism; it has become a global phenomenon in recent times. This is especially so in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Yemen in the Middle East and Nigeria, Somalia, Niger, Chad, D.R. Congo, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Libya in Africa—all of which are ranked among the 20 most terrorized countries in the 2020 Global Terrorism Index [1]. Besides terrorism casualties, which is estimated in the millions, 82.4 million people were displaced in 2020, with 48 million of them remaining within their country of origin. People displaced within their countries are called internally displaced persons (IDPs), most of who live in makeshift camps within countries where they were displaced [2]. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has killed over 20,000 people, and over 2.5 million have been displaced since 2009 [1–3]. According to the Principle 28 of the United Nations Guiding Principles on IDPs, the government of each nation with IDPs, should collaborate with relevant humanitarian agencies to coordinate camps, provision relief materials, and develop skills acquisition [4]. To promote sustainable reintegration, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees funds basic needs and livelihood projects [5] which include community empowerment programs [6], microcredit,

and cooperation-based schemes used to link IDPs to formal financial services [7]. Successful reintegration of IDPs depends on the implementation and monitoring of agreed principles at the local, regional, and national level [8]. The government in partnership with these agencies also coordinate IDPs reintegration efforts after the restoration of peace. The Nigerian government has played a leading role in IDP reintegration, through the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons, and the National and State Emergency Management Agencies (NEMA and SEMA) in partnership with international organizations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and International Red Cross. As such, there are several IDPs camps in North-East Nigeria erected by the Federal government through NEMA in partnership with state governments and SEMA [9–11]. There are also more makeshift camps built by IOM and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in North-East Nigeria [9,12]. Moreover, the government established the North-East Development Commission in 2016 to oversee possible sustainable mechanisms for reintegrating its IDPs [13].

Terrorism has crippled the socioeconomic development of North-East Nigeria, i.e., the operation base of Boko Haram. Many villages have been destroyed, and economic activities were destabilized through the destruction of markets, banking halls, and farmlands. Consequently, livelihoods in these geopolitical areas are extremely difficult. Due to increased counterterrorism through the joint military task force among Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, North-East Nigeria has experienced relative peace since 2017, except for a slight relapse in the first quarter of 2019. As a result, some IDPs have voluntarily returned to their communities of origin (COO) while some still reside in host communities across North-East Nigeria. The Nigerian government has persuaded them to return home in the wake of relative peace in their COO to start life afresh and earn a living. However, most of the IDPs are still unwilling to return, a decision attributed to the destruction of their villages and means of economic survival during the peak of terrorism in the region (i.e., between 2014 and 2016). Even though it is important that the IDPs return, reintegration must be voluntary because enforced reintegration or repatriation is against international refugee law as enshrined in the United Nations Guiding Principles on IDPs [4,14]. Nonetheless, it is still the government’s desire for IDPs to return to their COO to overcome social, security, and economic barriers, and aid in rebuilding a more united, prosperous country. For instance, situations of violation against the rights of IDPs have been traced to as far back as the Second World War [15,16] and, unfortunately, have not abated, especially in Africa and in the Middle East. The lack of or inadequate finance has also been one of the main challenges of IDPs in Nigeria and other African countries such as D.R. Congo, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique—since most are unemployed [17–19]. As a result, the need to return home or integrate elsewhere to be able to earn a living is prioritized and remains critical to the country’s development. As such, it is necessary to investigate reasons why IDPs in Nigeria show apathy towards reintegration despite peace restoration in their COO.

Kveder and Flahaux [20] found a positive relationship between displacement and capital accumulation among forced migrants, especially those who found better-paying jobs or crossed international borders. Their unwillingness to return when the government makes a call for reintegration is closely documented. Successful reintegration goes beyond economic reintegration to include social and political reintegration with IDPs full participation in their communities and political landscape [21]. In the Philippines, IDPs’ top three considerations for return was reported on by Collado [22], i.e., (1) employment opportunities, (2) available business capital assistance, and (3) financial assistance for housing. Moreover, another recent study found that although peace restoration is welcomed, unless sources of water both for domestic and agrarian purposes are available, most of which were damaged in the peak of the insurgency in North-East Nigeria are restored, displaced persons would not be willing to return to their COO [19,23]. More so, the return of displaced persons to their former communities has induced several disputes on repossession of real estate property in some African countries with weak relevant social institutions unable to find plausible

solutions. The fear of escalation of post-return riots on repossession of real estate properties might also make Nigerian IDPs unwilling to return. For IDPs in Burundi, asset ownership such as land and livestock upon reintegration and community support correlated with a desire to return and cope with food security [24]. Moreover, access to improved healthcare across IDPs camps and host communities among elderly and reproductive IDP women are also key reasons some displaced persons in Turkey and Afghanistan were reluctant to return to their COO [25,26]. A recent study also associated reluctance to voluntary return with power outage in those communities that had electricity before displacement [23]. Some studies also found that the reluctance of ex-warlords, child soldiers, and combatants to return home is based on the difficulty to gain acceptance, warmth, and love back from their communities at the expiration of war, e.g., Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia [18,27]. This, however, is not the case in Nigeria because Nigerian IDPs are not ex-soldiers or warlords. Reintegration to post-conflict communities has been found not only a boost in socioeconomic activities but also has been linked with induced urbanization [19,28] and school resumption for displaced school aged children. This is crucial since Catalano [29] conferred that unless concerted efforts are made by parents, and backed by a strong institutional framework, the effects of forced displacement on primary school pupils may be long-lasting.

Despite these perceived and real benefits of reintegration, IDPs in Nigeria are still showing apathy to it. There is a dearth in the literature on IDPs' reluctance to return home and why in Nigeria the case is no different. Employing Cernea's [30] Risk, Safeguard, and Reconstruction Model, this research, in retrospect, examines the core economic drivers of willingness for voluntary return among conflict-induced internally displaced persons (CiIDPs) in North-East Nigeria. The findings from the study will contribute to the existing literature on social factors found in previous studies [19,25,26,31]. Findings will also help the Nigerian government decide which economic factors are pertinent to encourage reintegration among IDPs in Nigeria. Moreover, it will help stakeholders and policymakers build social institutions and agencies to drive the demands of displaced persons towards sustainable development in COO. This will help to solve the problem of poverty and hunger among CiIDPs in Nigeria, which interrelates with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—specifically, SDG1 and SDG2.

## **2. Risks, Safeguard, and Reconstruction Model: Population Displacement and Resettlement**

This research uses Cernea's [30] Risk, Safeguard, and Reconstruction Model which is one of the foremost models proposed in the early 1980s for guiding equity during population displacement and resettlement programs. In this model, Cernea [30] identified a high level of inequality and injustice by displaced persons especially during reconstruction and development. This is important since IDPs can share the benefits of growth economically, socially, and—in a community sense—emotionally. According to Cernea [30], resettlement must be socially responsible, guided by equity so that no returning CiIDP is impoverished after resettlement. To deal with any form of impoverishment, it is suggested that a risk and reconstruction framework for resettlement operations is structured; it will need to be framed in such a way that the unintended flaws associated with policies and methodologies of planning and financing resettlement projects is closely considered and appropriately administered.

Cernea [30] argues that before resettlement, displaced persons need rehabilitation to address the trauma they have experienced. In most cases, however, this does not happen. For example, during the intensive reconstruction project in India in the early 1990s, 75% of those displaced were not rehabilitated and were more impoverished than prior to their displacement [32–34]. This is not limited to India, as such impoverishments and injustices are endemic in developing countries [15,27,35]. Furthermore, the social exclusion that displaced persons suffer [36,37] which is contrary to the true intention of resettlement and development. Worried by these trends, i.e., those associated with reconstruction and

development, Cernea [30] developed a model of risks and risk avoidance anchored on four intrinsic concepts. The first concept suggests that wherever resettlement is to take place, the landless, homeless, and jobless must be protected and provided with economic recovery routes. Second, marginalization must be discouraged at every stage of the reconstruction and resettlement processes. Third, there must be a focus on food security to ensure sustenance during displacement. Fourth, the restoration of land and other resources to the rightful owners must be employed [30]. Together, these four concepts will facilitate that the reconstruction and development processes are just, equitable, and fair. On the other hand, if they are not fulfilled, the displaced will either be reluctant to return or be impoverished at the end of the integration process.

### 3. Materials and Methods

A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument of data collection for this study. The questionnaire contains two sections. Section A examines the background characteristics of the respondents, while section B made inquiries into the economic determinants of willingness for voluntary return among CiIDPs in Nigeria. A total of 928 respondents were randomly selected from CiIDPs in selected IDPs camps across the three core states in North-East Nigeria, i.e., where Boko Haram activities were intense, leading to unprecedented displacements. A list of all IOM recognized IDPs camps in three of Nigeria's states are presented in Table 1. After the listing and number of IDPs were recorded, systematic sampling was performed and two IDPs camps in Adamawa State, two in Yobe State, and four in Borno State were assayed. Furthermore, four camps were selected in Borno State since it housed over 70% of all the IDPs in Nigeria. Having synthesized the statistics, systematic sampling method was used to select the first and third camp in Adamawa State, the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth camp in Borno State, being the state with the largest number of IDP camps, and the first and third camp in Yobe State. This implied that eight IDPs camps were systematically selected for sampling. The total number of questionnaires that were administered in each IDPs camp was proportionally calculated according to the number of IDPs in each camp so as to deal with the issue of skewness. It is important to state that many of the IDPs camps have closed because many IDPs have settled down in host communities which are relatively peaceful. However, the listed camps and the number of IDPs in each are still recognized by the Federal government as well as the states where they are cited. The total number of IDPs remaining in camps across the North-East is 34,110 IDPs, which was benchmarked as the target population for the study. When the target population (i.e., 34,110 IDPs) is divided by the sample size of 928, it gives a score of 36.8. This infers that approximately, one IDP per 37 IDPs in North-East was interviewed for the study, making it a representative sample of IDPs with similar challenges.

Respondents were asked to select from a range of questions specific to economic need and what might likely induce their willingness to voluntarily return home, as well as what might make the return sustainable. Their responses were later regrouped and recoded into four categories: 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, and 10–12 which connote economic needs that are “not a priority, low, high, and highest priority”, respectively, to their willingness for voluntary return. The four economic needs that were ranked by the respondents are reintegration and financial assistance (RFA), subsidized agricultural implements and seed stock (SAIS), employment and job opportunities (EJO), and opening of commercial centers (OCC). It is important to note that SAIS refers to the common crops such as improved maize seed, millet, sorghum, beans, and improved rice seed stock which were grown in the environment prior to the displacement as well as subsidized amount for hiring tractors, mowers, and other heavy equipment for mechanized agriculture. These core economic needs emanate from extensive review of similar literature [27,38,40–43] on economic factors that encouraged displaced persons to return home after peace restoration to their communities in Liberia and Uganda. Since the IDPs were displaced from agrarian communities, most of them were farmers prior to being displaced. The idea behind the grouping was to examine which economic needs innovatively and intuitively would induce the interest of CiIDPs in Nigeria

to return home. The displaced were also asked to list any other economic needs which may encourage them to a voluntary return. The study sought this additional information for three scientific reasons. One, it wanted new contributions to knowledge going beyond what previous base knowledge explored. Two, the background characteristics of IDPs in Nigeria might be different from those in Liberia and Uganda, i.e., country-specific requisites. Third, the environment (i.e., microclimate) in Nigeria is different from Liberia and Uganda, and such a factor may play a part in IDPs' decision to return to their COO.

**Table 1.** Names of camps and numbers of IDPs in North-East, Nigeria, dated 28 February 2018.

S/N	Locations of IDPs Camps	Estimated Population of IDPs in Camp
<b>IDPs camps in Adamina State</b>		
1	Damare Camp, Fufore LGA	1845
2	Angwan Kara Camp, Girei LGA	784
3	Malkohi Camp, Yola South LGA	1491
	Total Number of IDPs in Adamawa State	4120
<b>IDPs camps in Borno State</b>		
1	NYSC Camp Maiduguri	5587
2	Chad Basin Camp, Bornu State	5336
3	Government Girls' College, Maiduguri	4750
4	Dalori I & II IDPs Camp	7500
5	Government Girls' Secondary School, Yelwa	5681
6	Government Girls' Secondary School, Biu	2250
7	Bakasi/Farm Centre IDPs Camp	6000
8	Government Secondary School, Maiduguri	3352
9	Wulari IDP Camp, Maiduguri	9021
10	Shetima Ali Monguno IDPs Camp	2000
11	Sanda Kyarimi Secondary School	1003
12	Ngomari Gana Primary School	2700
	Total Number of IDPs in Borno State	55,180
<b>IDPs camps in Yobe State</b>		
1	Sabonsara IDPs Camp, Potiskum LGA	651
2	Pompomari Primary School Camp, Gubja LGA	1850
3	YBC Camp, Damaturu LGA	9036
	Estimated Total Number of IDPs in Yobe State	11,536
	Estimated Grand total for Adamawa, Borno, Yobe States	70,837

Source: IOM [38] and Enitan-Matthews [39] as supplied by NEMA.

The study's ethical issues on investigating human subjects were in-line with Covenant University Health Research Ethics Committee and international best practices were adopted according to the Helsinki Declaration. Participants gave their informed consent and received information about the nature of the study, about the voluntary nature of their participation, and that they could withdraw at any stage of the discussion if they felt unsafe or unsatisfied with the questions asked. The researchers also assured participant anonymity and privacy. In terms of the validity and reliability of the research data, similar studies of this nature in Africa, Asia, and Latin America [18,38,40,44–48] have used the same method and recorded bountiful results. Scientifically, the reliability of data of this nature is cross validated if similar results have been obtained in similar research endeavors. Except for gender distribution of the respondents, most other results obtained in this research, especially on security, capital for business, and skill acquisition validate findings from other similar studies. Data collection lasted for 5 months. This study used two levels of data analysis: univariate and multivariate. The univariate technique was adopted to analyze the background characteristics of the respondents while for the multivariate level, binary logistic regression was employed to estimate the odds of willingness for voluntary return—controlling for respondent-selected socioeconomic needs. Binary logistics was



adopted because the response to the dependent variable (i.e., willingness to return) is dichotomous, categorical, and cannot be ordered. Willingness to return was responded to as ‘unwilling’ (i.e., 0) and ‘willing’ (i.e., 1). The description of the regression model adopted for this study used Equation (1).

$$\text{Log } p/1-P = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + e \quad (1)$$

where: P is the likelihood of willingness to return based on the selected economic needs, 1-P is the likelihood of unwillingness to return given the same selected economic needs;  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  are a set of independent variables earlier stated;  $\alpha$  is the regression constant;  $\beta_n$  are regression coefficients; and  $e$  is the error term.

The implicit function of the model is stated as Equation (2).

$$Y = f(X, T) \quad (2)$$

where: Y is the willingness to return (i.e., dependent variable); X is the vector for background characteristics denoted as follows: SOO—State of Origin, RC—Residence Category, E—Ethnicity, LE—Level of Education, A—Age, and DC—Duration in the Camp; and T is the vector for economic variables denoted as follows: RFAS, SAIS, EJO, and OCC.

The explicit function of the model is stated, thus, using Equation (3).

$$Y = \beta + \beta_1 RFA + \beta_2 E + \beta_3 AIS + \beta_4 OCC + \dots + e \quad (3)$$

where: Y is the dependent variable representing willingness to return;  $\beta_1$  to  $\beta_4$  are the regression coefficient; and  $e$  is the error term.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Background Characteristics of Respondents

At the end of the fieldwork, 866 questionnaires were found eligible for the study, which gives a response rate of 93.3%. The descriptive analysis of selected background characteristics of the respondents is shown in Table 2. The majority (i.e., 73.6%) of the displaced persons in Nigeria were from Borno State while 21.9% and 4.5% were from Yobe and Adamawa States, respectively. Inquiry into their residence categories before displacement shows that most (i.e., 71.8%) of the displaced persons were actually from rural communities, while 15.2% were displaced from semi-urban communities, and about 13% were displaced from urban centers. As for age categories, the results showed that 19.9% of the displaced ranged between 15 and 24 years old, 38.5% were between 25 and 34 years old, 25.4% were between 34 and 44 years old, 11.3% were between 45 and 54 years old, and 5% were 55 years and above.

**Table 2.** Selected background characteristics of the respondents.

Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>State of origin</b>		
Borno State	637	73.6
Adamawa State	39	4.5
Yobe State	190	21.9
<b>Residence prior displacement</b>		
Rural	622	71.8
Semi-urban	132	15.2
Urban	112	12.9
<b>Age</b>		
15–24	172	19.9
25–34	333	38.5
35–44	220	25.4
45–54	98	11.3
55 and above	43	5.0

Table 2. Cont.

Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	263	30.4
Male	603	69.6
<b>Level of education</b>		
No formal education	564	65.1
Primary education	145	16.7
Nomadic primary education	26	3.0
Secondary education	105	12.1
Tertiary education	26	3.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	133	15.4
Married	618	71.4
Divorced	36	4.2
Widowed	64	7.4
Never married	15	1.7
<b>Duration in the camp</b>		
1 Year	32	3.7
2 Years	175	20.2
3 Years	362	41.8
4 Years and above	297	34.3
<b>Occupation prior displacement</b>		
Farming	479	55.3%
Trade and business	115	13.3
Civil servant	73	8.4
Artisan	69	8.0
Self-employed and other	130	14.0
<b>Income level prior displacement</b>		
Below NGN 20,000	362	41.8
NGN 20,000–NGN 39,999	224	25.9
NGN 40,000–NGN 59,999	82	9.5
NGN 60,000–NGN 79,999	100	11.5
NGN 80,000 and above	18	2.1
Not applicable	80	9.2

Source: Authors' own compilation from the field survey, 2021.

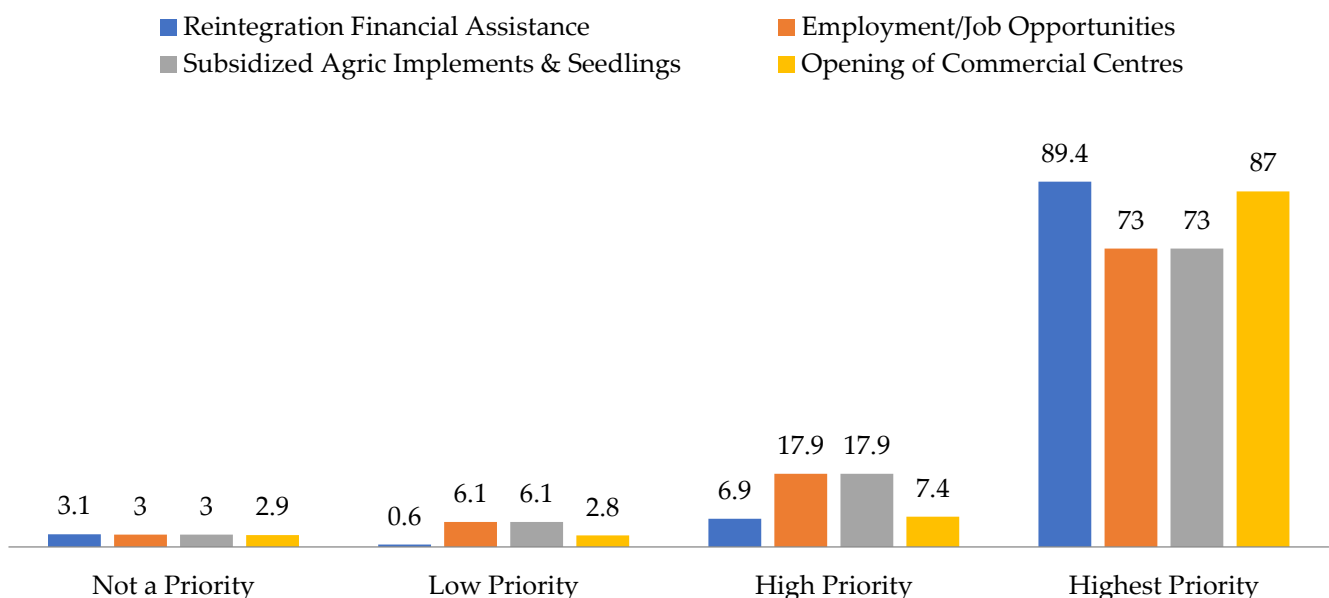
Surprisingly, results about gender distribution of CiIDPs in North-East Nigerian camps showed that 30.4% of the displaced persons are female, while 69.6% of them are male. It should be noted that one of the reasons for this gender distribution was children less than 15 years old were left out of the study since they might not be able to account for economic variables that induce return willingness. Results about their educational status showed that more than half (i.e., 65.1%) of them did not have formal education. Those who have primary education were 16.7%, while 3%, 12.1% and 3% have nomadic primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education, respectively. Inquiry about their occupation before displacement showed that above half (i.e., 55.3%) of them were farmers while only 8.4% were civil servants. Those who were into businesses before being displaced were 13.3% while 8% were artisans. In addition, 4.7% were self-employed and others and those who ticked not applicable most likely were not working in any capacity (i.e., 1.8%). The result on marital status shows that 15.4% of the displaced persons in Nigeria who participated in the study were single while 71.4% were married; 4.2% of the displaced were divorced, and 7.4% and about 2% were widowed and never married, respectively. These never-married IDPs are those who have one or two births out of wedlock and those cohabiting. Income level of the respondents prior displacement was also examined, indicating that almost 49% of the Nigerian IDPs earned less than NGN 20,000 per month (i.e., USD 48) before being displaced. Distribution of other categories of earnings shows that about 30% of them earned between NGN 20,000 and NGN 39,999 (i.e., USD 49 and USD 98) while 9.5% and 11.5% earned between NGN 40,000–59,999 (i.e., USD 99–148) and NGN 60,000–79,999

(i.e., USD 149–198), respectively. Only 2.1% of the IDPs in Nigeria earned NGN 80,000 (i.e., USD 199) or above per month before displacement. Those who were not working (i.e., 9.2%) before displacement said this variable did not apply to them. Finally, an inquiry into duration spent so far in camp showed that 3.7% of them had spent 1 year in the camp and 20.2% had spent 2 years in the camp. About 42% of them had spent 3 years, while 34.3% had spent 4 years and above in the camp.

#### 4.2. Economic Needs of CiIDPs and Willingness for Voluntary Return

To reiterate the scaling of the economic needs, the rank of “not a priority” meant that displaced persons did not need such requirements for them to willingly return. For those ranked as “low priority,” it meant that although the displaced persons needed them, they were not too important to the community and they could live without for some time. While the rank of “high priority” meant the requirement was very important and such a need would affect their level of sustenance and survival. Finally, those ranked as the “highest priority” were those that the displaced would not even contemplate returning unless they were available. These four economic needs of reintegration of financial assistance is IOM benchmarked at a minimum of USD 580 for every returnee in an ideal situation [38]. The other three economic needs are EJO in the post-conflict communities, SAIS being an agrarian society, and OCC such as banks, shopping malls, local markets, and the like.

RFA, otherwise popularly referred to as reparation, meant a little amount of money given to migrants when they are returning to their COO after displacement for a certain period. The money is intended to help them settle quickly, feed themselves for a short period, or establish themselves in micro-businesses to discourage begging—especially in the first few months of return. The results of their ranking are presented in Figure 1. RFA for the initial stability on return ranks the highest (i.e., 89.4%) among the displaced persons for willingness to return, and only 3.1% as not a priority. Besides ranking as the highest priority, 6.9% also ranked it as high priority to their willingness for voluntary return. This implies that cumulatively, 96.3% of the IDPs in Nigeria ranked RFA as the most crucial demand for willingness for a voluntary to return to their COO.



**Figure 1.** Economic needs towards willingness for voluntary return of CiIDPs, percentage.

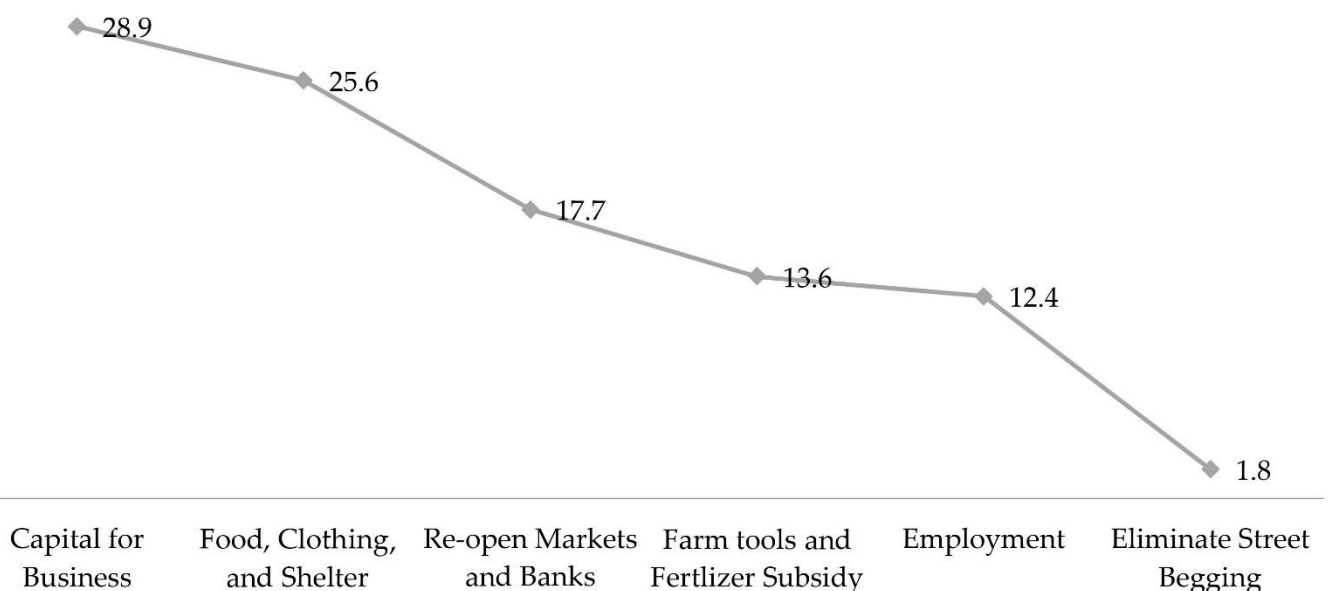
EJO had a rank of 73% for the highest priority while 3% said it was not a priority. If combined with 17.9% who said EJO was of high priority, it implies that cumulatively 90.9% of them ranked EJO as of significant priority to their willingness for voluntary return. Moreover, 73% of them said that SAIS such as tractors, fertilizer, and high-yield seed stock



were of highest priority to them while 3% said they were not a priority. Lastly, only 2.9% of the respondents said that OCC such as markets, shopping complex, stores, and other such services were not a priority to their willingness for voluntary return, as 87% said that was of the highest priority. If combined with 7.4% who ranked OCC as a high priority, it implies that 94.4% of the displaced persons in Nigeria see OCC as very crucial to their willingness for voluntary return. This places OCC as the second-best ranked economic variable besides RFA.

#### 4.3. Other Suggested Economic Drivers of Voluntary Return among CiIDPs

Respondents were given the opportunity to list additional economic needs which they desired but were not part of the ranking. The research identified this type of exploration as a first of its kind within the literature on reintegration, and the responses were most revealing. The results of the list are presented in Figure 2. It showed that capital for business topped the list of the needs (i.e., 28.9%) among the displaced persons in Nigeria. They opined that the capital was to buy equipment and establish themselves using some of the vocational trainings and skills they acquired from their various camps.



**Figure 2.** Suggested economic needs for voluntary return of CiIDPs, percentage.

Food, clothing, and shelter were listed by almost 26% of the respondents as part of their pre-return needs before they could be willing to go back home. About 18% of the IDPs said the reopening of markets and banks was crucial to their willingness to return while nearly 14% of them said that subsidies for farm tools, chemicals, and fertilizer were vital for their reentry. Employment as a need for returning came up again as 12.4% of the IDPs listed it as essential for them to consider going home. Lastly, but surprisingly, about 2% of them thought that street begging should be eliminated from their communities for them to be willing to return. This may be because some of the IDPs linked the issue of insecurity to street beggars and, in fact, many of the recent suicide bombers snuck into town as street beggars before detonating the bombs.

#### 4.4. Odds of Willingness for Voluntary Return on Respondents' Selected Economic Needs

Influence in terms of the provision of selected economic needs were examined on the willingness of the displaced persons' desire to return through binary logistics regression. Three selected economic variables were used to control for willingness to return as shown in Table 3, i.e., RFA, EJO, and OCC. The odds ratio column indicates the change in the predictor variable, i.e., willingness for voluntary return or otherwise. Displaced persons

who view RFA as the highest priority for them to return home are 0.74 times less likely than those who do not view it as a priority. However, those who view it as a low priority are almost 5 times more likely to be willing to go back home than those who do not consider it as a priority. Those who consider EJO as the highest priority for their willingness to return are 1.40 times more likely than those who do not view EJO as a priority. Also, those who consider EJO high priority for reintegration are 14.11 times more likely than those who do not view it as a priority. More importantly, there is a significant relationship between employment and job opportunities back at home and willingness for a voluntary return (i.e., OR = 14.11;  $p < 0.05$ ). OCC is the last variable examined and shows that those who consider it as their highest priority are 0.42 times less likely to be willing to return. However, those who considered OCC a low priority for their willingness to return are 3.19 times more likely to desire a return to their COO.

**Table 3.** Logistics regression estimating the odds of willingness to return controlling for respondents selected economic needs.

Variables and Selected Economic Needs	Level of Priority	Odds Ratio (Exp. $\beta$ )	Str. Error	$p$ -Value
Reintegration financial assistance	Not a priority	RC	-	-
	Low priority	4.99	1.45	0.27
	High priority	0.20	1.34	0.23
	Highest priority	0.74	0.57	0.60
Employment and job opportunities	Not a priority	RC	-	-
	Low priority	0.10	162.06	0.99
	High priority	14.11	0.90	0.003 **
	Highest priority	1.40	0.38	0.38
Opening of commercial centers	Not a priority	RC	-	-
	Low priority	3.19	16.06	0.99F
	High priority	0.21	0.94	0.10
	Highest priority	0.42	0.60	0.14
Log-likelihood		717.360		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.376		
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>		104.374		
Prob > Chi <sup>2</sup>		(df = 30)		
		0.000		

Source: Authors' own compilation from the field survey, 2021; RC = reference category; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ .

Those who identified EJO as the highest priority for their willingness to return are 1.40 times more likely to be willing to return than those who do not view EJO as a priority for them to desire a voluntary return. Furthermore, those who consider EJO as a high priority for reintegration are 14.11 times more likely to be willing to return home than those who do not view it as a priority. More importantly, there is a significant relationship between employment/job opportunities back at home and willingness for a voluntary return (i.e., OR = 14.11;  $p < 0.05$ ). OCC is the last variable examined, and results show that those who consider it as their highest priority to desire a return are 0.42 times less likely to be willing to return. However, those who imagine OCC as a low priority for their willingness to return are 3.19 times more likely to desire a return to their COO.

The results in the model show a Log-likelihood ratio (LLR) of 717.360,  $R^2 = 37.6$ , and Log Chi-square = 104.374 on 30 degrees of freedom while  $p$ -value = 0.001. This implies that the adjusted model summary showed that the independent variables (i.e., the selected economic characteristics) were able to explain 37.6% change in the desire of displaced persons in Nigeria to be willing to return home with an LLR of 717.360 on 30 degrees of freedom. It can, therefore, be asserted that the selected economic needs have a positive influence on the desire of CiIDPs in Nigeria for a choice of voluntary return to their COO. The overall percentage, from the regression analysis, indicates a 59.4% level of accuracy in the prediction of the outcome variable. The model summary shows 16.1% and 21.5% level

of variations in the predicted variable as explained by the independent variables given by “Cox and Snell R square” (i.e., 0.161) and “Nagelkerke R square” (i.e., 0.215). This provides confidence that this model is relevant in demonstrating the effect of respondents selected economic needs on the willingness to voluntarily return home. Overall, the statistics supported that the model correctly predicts the outcome variable by 59.4%. This implies that the planned reintegration of CiIDPs in Nigeria would not be successful and sustainable if the government does not address these economic needs and IDPs are forced to return to their COO.

## 5. Discussion

RFA was ranked highest (i.e., 89.4%) amongst CiIDPs’ needs for voluntary return, which was not a surprise for three main reasons, among others. First, previous studies on IDPs in Africa have cited lack of money (i.e., finance) to cater for IDPs’ daily life as the most prominent need [15,17]. Second, no one wants to return to their COO without a fixed source of income and resort to begging to survive. The IDPs stated that they wanted to at least settle down with some financial assistance while they transitioned to a form of gainful economic activity. Third, IOM, the largest international agency facilitating assisted voluntary return and reintegration globally, made it a statutory requirement that every returning migrant receives a minimum of USD 580 when they decide to return to their COO, especially in a post-conflict context of this nature [38]. The displaced persons in Nigeria and our respondents are yet to receive this allotment which may contribute to their unwillingness to return. Although, most of them noted they were not aware of that until the news of it started to be reported among camp personnel. They are, however, of the opinion that even if the IOM-regulated amount is not available, the government should at least provide them a little amount of money for immediate use upon their return. The Nigerian government can also use micro-credit and cooperative programs as financial strategies to facilitate IDPs access to formal financial services [7] immediately upon their return. Lack of finance to get food items and other personal needs were some of the reasons for unsuccessful reintegration and consequent protracted civil war and re-displacement among formerly displaced persons in Colombia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia [18,40,43]. Therefore, in line with Cernea’s [30] risks and risk avoidance model, it will truly be risky for displaced persons to return to their COO without any hope of livelihood. This would mean returning to hunger, hopelessness, and desperation which may not be unconnected with their apathy toward the government’s plea for them to return home.

EJO was another economic variable ranked very high among the returning migrants. This is in line with previous studies which have confirmed that having a way to earn a living upon returning home is likely to guide against re-displacement as was experienced in Liberia and northern Uganda. Besides, the challenge of local hostility which returning migrants usually face in their previous communities may be reduced since they are engaged in productive economic activities [43]. Gaining employment is a challenge for displaced persons even if they choose to migrate overseas as refugees. Similarly, finding among IDPs in the Philippines showed that the need for employment and financial assistance to start a business and obtain housing was a primary challenge [22]. For example, in an empirical study by Verwiebe et al. [46], incoming refugees from the Middle East faced several challenges in obtaining employment in Austria as a result of difficulties relating to culture, language, and discrimination, among other factors. If securing employment poses a challenge to incoming migrants in a developed economy such as Austria, IDPs in North-East Nigeria may also experience problems reintegrating to a largely agrarian society in a developing country. Displaced persons in Nigeria appear to be aware of this fact, which is why in our regression analysis, EJO was significantly related (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ) to a willingness to return. This implies that displaced persons will be willing to return to their COO once they are sure that they will be productively engaged which would help them make a living. One of the risks to guide against in returning IDPs to their root as discussed by Cernea [30] is social isolation. The fact is that returning migrants will not experience

such a risk if they are not productively engaged and self-sufficient which is why having something to do is very crucial upon returning to their COO.

Moreover, the high ranking of OCC is understandable since these centers were completely destroyed while others were shut down for fear of being attacked during the peak of the insurgency between 2014 and 2016. Many of them are still not opened to date. Therefore, reopening them and commencing commercial activities was viewed by the displaced people as one of the key determinants of the desire to return. This is in tandem with previous studies which link economic recovery and sustainable reintegration in post-conflict communities to resuscitation of commercial activities [40,45,47,48]. Therefore, restoration of commercial activities is a key requirement for previously displaced persons to desire a return.

Another factor ranking as very high were SAIS, which is not a big surprise, bearing in mind that North-East Nigeria is an agrarian society. Descriptive statistics from the fieldwork shows that more than half (i.e., 55.3%) of the displaced persons from the region were involved in farming. This implies that they may likely return to farming after successful reintegration. The opportunity to obtain improved seed stock, fertilizers, and other farm equipment subsidized or at lower prices are needed for them to return to farming. They will also be able to sell their farm produce in the market if commercial activities have been restored as previously discussed. As such, OCC and SAIS work side by side as far as this study is concerned. Previous studies showed that some Albanian farmers were only able to return to their COO and restart their sheep farming after they were encouraged with equipment and capital [40] while IDPs in Burundi seemed to be encouraged by the return of asset ownership including land and livestock [24]. Hence, it should be noted that displaced persons in Nigeria will be sustainably reintegrated if similar gestures are extended to them.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

It was found that RFA, occupation back at home, reopening of commercial centers, and SAIS implementation act as the dominant economic determinants to induce willingness for voluntary return among CiIDPs in Nigeria. Suggested economic needs listed also re-emphasized the importance of some of these economic needs as they were repeated. It can be concluded that the results have implications for institutions and social agencies in Nigeria, i.e., especially the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development, since the responsibility of caring for the displaced persons is primarily a humanitarian effort. If the Nigerian government desires to reintegrate displaced persons as promised, the appropriate agencies should equip them economically as noted in this study. The following recommendations, based on the results, are pertinent to the findings and closely intertwined with international IDP standards.

- Commercial activities should be resuscitated in the region. This will augment the regional economics of buying and selling (e.g., markets) and aid in fast-tracking a return to life pre-displacement.
- The returnees should be financially assisted in-line with IOM [38] regulation, i.e., USD 580 for every formerly displaced person who wants to return to their COO. If the entire amount is not available, a based amount should be provided by the Nigerian government, e.g., USD 290 or half of what IOM regulates.
- Economic opportunities in terms of jobs or encouragement to practice skills learned in the camp would go a long way to induce the desire of the displaced to return. This is supported by the human capital theory which posits that education and skills training increases individual capacity to become productive which, in turn, impacts their ability to secure a place in the job market and earn wages.
- Since the majority of the returnees are farmers, the Nigerian government should assist them with improved and subsidized seed stock. As found in the results, this type of assistance would help to induce their willingness for voluntary return as a large portion of the respondents work as farmers.

It is the authors' conclusion that IDPs in Nigeria will willingly return home, become engaged economically, and be sustainably reintegrated if, e.g., the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development, and other allied social agencies in Nigeria, collaborate with other concerned stakeholders to follow the above recommendations. Further studies should concentrate on this specific issue of how social institutions can collaborate with government agencies to evaluate and raise funds to finance reintegration, since it is a costly exercise which must be monitored and properly mitigated among interested stakeholders.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization and writing—original draft preparation: P.O.A.; Methodology, software, formal analysis, validation, investigation, resources, and data curation, P.O.A., D.E.A., E.O.A., G.B. and G.T.C.; Writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, and project administration, G.T.C.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** We appreciate the Centre for Research, Innovation, and Discovery, Covenant University for funding the research. The APC was funded by the Polo Centre of Sustainability.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** In accordance with the Ethical Committee of the University of Gdansk, the Committee has approved the project entitled "Voluntary Return among Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria." The research and work described in the project outline is in-line and complies with the ethics of scientific research described in the Ethical Principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and other applicable ethical principles and legislation in the European Union. Inter-institutional communication with Covenant University, Nigeria, confirms the project is in accordance with the applicable ethical principles and legislation in Nigeria.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** All datasets are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are grateful to the fieldwork team that assisted with the questionnaire. We are also pleased to acknowledge the relevant authorities for their support as well as the team at the Polo Centre of Sustainability for their feedback.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. IEP. *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*; Institute of Economics and Peace: Sydney, Australia, 2019.
2. UNHCR. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*; United Nations High Commission for Refugees and United Nations Refugee Agency: Geneva, Switzerland, 2019.
3. IMO. *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration: At a Glance 2015*; International Organization for Migration: Geneva, Switzerland, 2015.
4. UNOCHA. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*; United Nations High Commission for Refugees and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: New York, NY, USA, 1991.
5. UNHCR. Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy: UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations. *Refug. Surv. Q.* **2009**, *28*, 205–221. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Skran, C. Returnees in Sierra Leone. *Forced Migr. Rev.* **2008**, *1*, 29–36.
7. Chowdhury, J. Reintegration of Internally Displaced People (IDPS): The Need for Micro Credit. *Refug. Surv. Q.* **2000**, *19*, 201–215. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Fagen, P.W. Peace Processes and IDP Solutions. *Refug. Surv. Q.* **2009**, *28*, 31–58. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. UNHCR. *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*; Global Protection Cluster Working Group, United Nations High Commission for Refugees and United Nations Refugee Agency: Geneva, Switzerland, 2006.
10. Premium Times. Boko Haram: UNICEF, Yobe Government to Create Tent Classes for Displaced Children from Boko Haram: UNICEF. 10 May 2015. Available online: [www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com) (accessed on 22 January 2022).
11. Osagioduwa, E.; Oluwakorede, O.T. Management of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa: Comparing Nigeria and Cameroon. *Afr. Res. Rev. Int. Multidiscip. J.* **2016**, *10*, 193–210.
12. ICRC. *Internal Displacement in Nigeria: Operationalising the Kampala Convention in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States*; International Committee of the Red Cross: Abuja, Nigeria, 2016.
13. Nyako, A.M. Concept Note on North-East Development Commission: An Institutional Framework for a Sustainable Solution to the North-East National Security Challenge. 2015. Available online: [www.statehouse.gov.ng](http://www.statehouse.gov.ng) (accessed on 16 April 2018).



14. Tete, S.Y.A. Any place could be home? Embedding refugee's voices into displacement resolution and state refugee policy. *Geoforum* **2012**, *43*, 106–115. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Olanrewaju, F.O.; Omotoso, F.; Alabi, J.O. Datasets on the challenges of forced displacement and coping strategies among displaced women in selected internally displaced persons' (IDPs) Camps in Nigeria. *Data Brief* **2018**, *20*, 152–158. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
16. Lori, J.R.; Boyle, J.S. Forced migration: Health and human rights issues among refugee populations. *Nurs. Outlook* **2015**, *63*, 68–76. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Adekola, P.O.; Azuh, D.; Amoo, E.O.; Brownell, G. Restoration of water supply in post-conflict communities in Nigeria and sustainable reintegration. *Int. J. Civ. Eng. Technol.* **2019**, *10*, 191–201.
18. Brownell, G.; Basham, R. NGO strategy toward the reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia, Africa: An online survey of services, roles, and activities. *Int. Soc. Work.* **2017**, *60*, 1074–1086. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Adekola, P.O.; Azuh, D.; Adeloje, D.; Amoo, E. Urban renewal in Nigeria: A slash and burn approach? *Environ. Dev. Sustain.* **2019**, *21*, 2165–2182. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Kveder, C.L.M.; Flahaux, M.L. Returning to Dakar: A mixed methods analysis of the role of migration experience for occupational status. *World Dev.* **2012**, *45*, 223–236. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Lukunka, B.N.; de Clercq, P. Political and economic reintegration: Key to successful return. *Forced Migr. Rev.* **2019**, *62*, 58–60.
22. Collado, Z.C. Determinants of return intentions among internally displaced persons (IDPs) of Marawi City, Philippines. *Dev. Pract.* **2020**, *30*, 113–124. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Adekola, P.O.; Azuh, D.; Amoo, E.O. Restoration of power supply to post-conflict communities in Northern Nigeria: Implication for sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants. *J. Phys. Conf. Ser.* **2019**, *1299*, 012023. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Fransen, S.; Bilgili, Ö. Who reintegrates? The constituents of reintegration of displaced populations. *Popul. Space Place* **2018**, *24*, 1. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Tezcan, T. On the move in search of health and care: Circular migration and family conflict amongst older Turkish immigrants in Germany. *J. Aging Stud.* **2018**, *46*, 82–92. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
26. Siegel, R.M. Migration and its influence on the knowledge and usage of birth control methods among Afghan women who stay behind. *Public Health* **2018**, *158*, 183–197.
27. Brownell, G.; Praetorius, R.T. Experiences of former child soldiers in Africa: A qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis. *Int. Soc. Work* **2017**, *60*, 452–469. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Martin-Diaz, J.; Palma, P.; Golijanin, J.; Notre, J.; Olivia, M.; Cengic, N. The urbanisation on the slopes of Sarajevo and the rise of geomorphological hazards during the post-war period. *Cities* **2018**, *76 Pt A*, 60–69. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Catalano, H. Socio-educational consequences of the remigration phenomenon. *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* **2015**, *180*, 49–54. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Cernea, M.M. Risks, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement. *Econ. Political Wkly.* **2000**, *35*, 3659–3678.
31. Leeuwen, M.V. Crisis or Continuity? Framing land disputes and local conflict resolution in Burundi. *Land Use Policy* **2010**, *27*, 753–762.
32. Fernandes, W.; Das, C.; Rao, S. Displacement and Rehabilitation: An Estimate of Extent and Prospects. In *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation*; Fernandes, W., Thukral, E.G., Eds.; Indian Social Institute: New Delhi, India, 1989.
33. Fernandes, W. Power and Powerlessness: Development Projects and Displacement of Tribals. *Soc. Action* **1991**, *41*, 243–270.
34. Mahapatra, L.K. Testing the Risks and Reconstruction Model on India's Resettlement Experiences. In *The Economics of Involuntary Resettlement: Questions' and Challenges*; Cernea, M., Ed.; The World Bank: Washington, DC, USA, 1999.
35. Adekola, P.O.; Azuh, D.; Amoo, E.O.; Olusanmi, O. Special appellation of special care? A quantitative analysis of the challenges facing development-induced internally displaced persons in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Osun Geogr. Rev.* **2020**, *3*, 10–21.
36. Ann, N. Amartya, K. sen and social exclusion. *Dev. Pract.* **2007**, *17*, 249–255. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Gerry, R.; Gore, C.; Figueiredo, J.B. (Eds.) *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*; International Institute for Labour Studies: Geneva, Switzerland, 1995.
38. IMO. *All Site Profile of IDPs Camps-Adamawa, Bornu & Yobe States*; International Organization for Migration: Geneva, Switzerland, 2018; Available online: <https://displacement.iom.int/nigeria> (accessed on 17 March 2018).
39. Enitan-Matthews, T. 700,000 IDPs Registered So Far-NEMA. Daily Post. 20 March 2014. Available online: <https://dailypost.ng/2014/11/20/700000-idps-registered-far-nema> (accessed on 27 April 2020).
40. Kaplan, O.; Nussio, E. Community counts: The reintegration of ex-combatants in Colombia. *Confl. Manag. Peace Sci.* **2015**, *35*, 132–153. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Maduka, E.I. Responses to Ecological Disaster Induced Displacement in Anambra State. Unpublished Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2012.
42. UNHCR. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020*; United Nations High Commission for Refugees and United Nations Refugee Agency: Geneva, Switzerland, 2021.
43. Lakor, A.A.; Denov, M. When war is better than peace: The post-conflict realities of children born of wartime rape in northern Uganda. *Child Abuse Negl.* **2017**, *65*, 255–265.
44. Awodola, B. An examination of methods to reintegrate former child soldiers in Liberia. *Intervention* **2012**, *10*, 30–42. [[CrossRef](#)]



45. Subedi, D.B. Conflict, Combatants and Cash: Economic Reintegration and Livelihoods of Ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Dev.* **2014**, *59*, 238–250. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Verwieber, R.; Kittel, B.; Delinger, F.; Liebhart, C.; Schiestl, D.; Haindorfer, R.; Liebdl, B. Finding your way into employment against all odds? Successful job search of refugees in Austria. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2019**, *45*, 1401–1418. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Tortorici, G.; Fiorito, F. Building in post-war environments. *Procedia Eng.* **2017**, *180*, 1093–1102. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Nnam, M.U.; Arua, M.C.; Otu, M.S. The use of women and children in suicide bombing by Boko Haram Terrorist Group in Nigeria. *Aggress. Violent Behav.* **2018**, *42*, 35–42. [[CrossRef](#)]