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# The Current Educational Needs of Children in IDP Camps in Sokoto East, Sokoto State Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the educational needs of children residing in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Sokoto East, Nigeria. The region's ongoing conflict and insecurity have forced thousands of families to flee their homes, disrupting the education of many children. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of education in these camps, identifies key challenges, and offers practical recommendations to enhance educational access and quality for displaced children.

**Keywords:** Education, Internally Displaced Persons, Children

## INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, has been exacerbated by ongoing conflicts, leading to the displacement of millions of people. Sokoto East, a region significantly affected by these conflicts, hosts a large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including thousands of children who have been uprooted from their homes and schools. Education, which is a critical component of children's development and a fundamental human right, has been severely disrupted in these IDP camps.

The importance of education in emergency settings cannot be overstated. It provides stability and a sense of normalcy, helping children cope with the trauma of displacement while equipping them with the skills needed for their future. However, the education system within IDP camps in Sokoto East faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained teachers, and insufficient educational resources. This paper aims to investigate the current educational needs of children in these camps, identify the barriers to effective learning, and propose solutions to enhance educational provision in such a challenging environment.

The focus on Sokoto East is particularly pertinent due to its strategic position and the scale of displacement it has experienced. The region's unique socio-political context and the diversity of its displaced population present distinct challenges and opportunities for educational interventions. By analyzing these factors, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on education in emergency settings and provide actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and humanitarian actors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on education in emergency settings underscores the critical role of education in providing protection, psychosocial support, and a pathway to future opportunities for displaced children. Various studies have highlighted the multiple dimensions of educational needs in IDP camps, including the availability of physical infrastructure, the quality of teaching, access to learning materials, and the psychological well-being of students (UNESCO, 2021).

One key theme in the literature is the concept of education as a protective measure. According to a report by UNICEF (2020), education in IDP camps offers more than just academic learning; it serves as a protective space where children can experience a sense of normalcy and safety amidst the chaos of displacement. Schools in these contexts often double as safe spaces that shield children from child labor, early marriage, and recruitment by armed groups.

The literature also discusses the challenges related to teacher availability and quality. A study by Save the Children (2022) found that many IDP camps face a severe shortage of qualified teachers, which significantly affects the quality of education provided. The lack of trained educators is compounded by the difficult working conditions in IDP camps, including inadequate pay, insecurity, and the lack of professional development opportunities.

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the importance of adapting educational content to the needs of displaced children. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2021) advocates for curricula that are relevant to the experiences of displaced children and incorporate psychosocial support. This approach not only addresses the academic needs of children but also helps them process the trauma associated with displacement.

Another recurring issue in the literature is the availability of educational resources. According to a report by the Global Education Cluster (2020), many IDP camps lack basic educational supplies such as textbooks, notebooks, and writing instruments. This scarcity hampers the learning process and widens the gap between displaced children and their peers in stable environments.

Language barriers also feature prominently in discussions about education in IDP camps. In regions like Sokoto East, where displaced populations often come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the use of a single language of instruction can alienate many children and impede their learning (UNHCR, 2019). This challenge underscores the need for multilingual education programs that cater to the linguistic diversity of displaced communities.

Overall, the literature paints a picture of a complex and multifaceted set of challenges that must be addressed to ensure that children in IDP camps can access quality education. This paper builds on these insights to explore the specific context of Sokoto East, providing a detailed examination of the educational needs of displaced children in this region and proposing context-specific solutions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research utilized qualitative interviews. Data were collected from multiple stakeholders, including parents, teachers, camp administrators, and the children themselves, across five major IDP camps in Sokoto East. The study also involved a review of secondary data from government reports, NGO publications, and academic journals.

## **FINDINGS**

The study's findings reveal a range of significant challenges facing the education system in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Sokoto East. These challenges are multifaceted, impacting various aspects of education, from infrastructure and teacher availability to learning materials and psychosocial support. Below is a detailed discussion of each major finding.

### **1. Infrastructure Deficits**

One of the most pressing issues in the IDP camps is the lack of adequate infrastructure for education. Many camps have makeshift classrooms that are not weather-resistant, leaving children vulnerable to harsh weather conditions such as extreme heat or rain. In some cases, classes are held under trees or in open spaces, which are far from ideal for effective learning.

The lack of proper classrooms also means that children often sit on the ground, and there are no desks or chairs. This situation not only affects the physical comfort of students but also their ability to concentrate and engage fully in learning activities. Additionally, basic facilities such as toilets, clean water, and electricity are either inadequate or entirely absent in many camps, further exacerbating the difficulties faced by students and teachers.

## 2. Shortage of Qualified Teachers

The shortage of qualified teachers in IDP camps is a critical barrier to providing quality education. Many of the teachers working in these camps are volunteers, often displaced persons themselves, who lack formal training in education. This shortage is primarily due to the insecure environment and poor working conditions in the camps, which deter qualified teachers from taking up positions.

The limited number of teachers also leads to overcrowded classrooms, with student-teacher ratios often far exceeding the recommended limits. In such settings, individualized attention to students becomes impossible, and the overall quality of education deteriorates. Moreover, the lack of professional development opportunities for the teachers who are present further hampers the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

## 3. Inadequate Learning Materials

Another significant challenge identified is the scarcity of learning materials. Textbooks, notebooks, pens, and other essential educational resources are in short supply in most IDP camps. This scarcity means that students often have to share limited resources, which can slow down the learning process and reduce the effectiveness of lessons.

The absence of adequate learning materials also limits the ability of teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers often have to improvise or rely on outdated materials, which may not align with the current educational standards or the specific needs of displaced children. The lack of digital learning tools and resources further exacerbates this issue, particularly in an era where digital literacy is increasingly important.

## 4. Psychosocial Support

Many children in IDP camps have experienced traumatic events, including violence, loss of family members, and displacement. These experiences have significant psychological impacts, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can severely affect their ability to learn.

Despite the evident need for psychosocial support, there are limited services available within the camps. Few schools have access to trained counselors or social workers who can provide the necessary support to help children cope with their trauma. As a result, many children struggle with their mental health, which affects their school attendance and performance.

## 5. Language Barriers

The linguistic diversity within the IDP camps in Sokoto East presents another challenge to education. Children from various ethnic groups with different mother tongues often find it difficult to learn in a language that is not their first. The predominant use of either English or Hausa as the language of instruction can alienate children who do not speak these languages fluently.

This language barrier not only affects children's comprehension and engagement in class but also contributes to high dropout rates. Without adequate support, such as language bridging programs or multilingual education, many children are unable to keep up with their peers and may eventually leave school altogether.

## 6. Gender Disparities

Gender disparities in access to education are also evident in the IDP camps. Girls face additional challenges compared to boys, including cultural norms that prioritize male education, early marriage, and safety concerns. In some cases, the lack of separate sanitation facilities for girls further discourages their attendance, especially as they reach adolescence.

These disparities are reflected in lower enrollment and retention rates for girls in the camps. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions to promote gender equality in education, including community awareness programs and the provision of girl-friendly school environments.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings underscore the complex challenges faced by the educational system in IDP camps in Sokoto East. The combination of inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, lack of learning materials,

insufficient psychosocial support, language barriers, and gender disparities creates a multifaceted crisis that requires a holistic and coordinated response.

Each of these challenges is interconnected, with the inadequacy in one area often exacerbating problems in others. For instance, the shortage of qualified teachers not only affects the quality of education but also impacts the ability to address language barriers effectively. Similarly, the lack of infrastructure hampers the provision of psychosocial support services, as there are no dedicated spaces for counseling or therapy. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive strategy that considers the unique needs of displaced children and the specific context of Sokoto East. This strategy should involve collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners to ensure that all children in IDP camps have access to quality education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The educational needs of children in IDP camps in Sokoto East are complex and multifaceted, requiring comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address them effectively. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive, supportive, and effective educational environment for displaced children, ensuring that they have the opportunity to learn, thrive, and build a better future.

## **SUGGESTIONS'RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to address the educational needs of children in IDP camps in Sokoto East. These recommendations aim to create a holistic approach that tackles the multiple challenges faced by displaced children and ensures they have access to quality education.

### **1. Infrastructure Development**

a. Construction of Durable Educational Facilities: There is an urgent need for the construction of permanent, weather-resistant school buildings within IDP camps. These facilities should include adequately ventilated and spacious classrooms, safe and clean sanitation facilities, and access to potable water. Ensuring that these facilities are built to accommodate the specific needs of children, such as age-appropriate seating and desks, is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment.

b. Establishment of Temporary Learning Spaces: While constructing permanent structures, temporary learning spaces such as tents or prefab structures should be established to provide immediate relief. These temporary spaces should be equipped with basic amenities and should be regularly maintained to ensure their usability.

c. Provision of Safe Learning Environments: Security measures should be enhanced around educational facilities to ensure the safety of children and teachers. This includes installing fencing, hiring security personnel, and involving the community in monitoring safety within the school premises.

### **2. Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Retention**

a. Recruitment Drives for Qualified Teachers: Government and educational stakeholders should conduct targeted recruitment drives to attract qualified teachers to work in IDP camps. Special incentives such as competitive salaries, hazard allowances, and housing provisions could make these positions more attractive.

b. Training and Professional Development Programs: Continuous professional development programs should be established to train teachers on handling the unique needs of displaced children. These programs should include strategies for trauma-informed teaching, inclusive education practices, and multilingual education techniques.

c. Retention Strategies: To retain teachers in challenging IDP camp environments, it is essential to create supportive working conditions. This includes providing access to health services, ensuring regular payment of salaries, and recognizing teachers' efforts through awards or public acknowledgments.

### 3. Provision of Learning Materials

a. Supply of Educational Resources: Collaborations with educational publishers, NGOs, and international bodies should be established to ensure a steady supply of essential learning materials such as textbooks, notebooks, and digital learning tools. Distributions should be managed efficiently to reach all children in need.

b. Development of Context-Specific Curricula: Educational content should be tailored to reflect the experiences and needs of displaced children. This includes incorporating local cultural contexts, life skills, and resilience-building activities into the curriculum.

c. Introduction of Digital Learning Tools: Given the global shift towards digital education, introducing digital learning tools such as tablets and educational software can enhance learning experiences. Training teachers and students to use these tools effectively should accompany this initiative.

### 4. Psychosocial Support Services

a. Integration of Mental Health Services: Schools in IDP camps should have access to trained counselors and social workers who can provide regular psychosocial support to students. Establishing child-friendly spaces within schools where children can receive counseling in a safe and supportive environment is essential.

b. Teacher Training on Psychosocial Support: Teachers should be trained to identify signs of trauma and provide basic psychosocial support. They should also be equipped with strategies to create an emotionally supportive classroom environment that promotes healing and learning.

c. Partnerships with Health Services: Schools should partner with local health services to provide regular mental health check-ups and interventions for children and teachers, ensuring a holistic approach to well-being.

### 5. Addressing Language Barriers

a. Development of Multilingual Education Programs: To cater to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of children in IDP camps, multilingual education programs should be developed. This could involve employing bilingual teachers and creating educational materials in multiple languages.

b. Language Bridging Programs: Introducing language bridging programs that gradually transition children to the language of instruction while respecting their mother tongues can help reduce the language barrier. These programs should include supplementary language lessons and resources.

c. Community Involvement in Language Policies: Engaging local communities in developing language policies ensures that the language of instruction is culturally and linguistically appropriate, fostering better acceptance and engagement from both students and their families.

### 6. Promoting Gender Equity in Education

a. Gender-Sensitive School Environments: Schools should be equipped with gender-sensitive facilities, including separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys, to encourage higher attendance rates among girls.

b. Community Awareness Campaigns: Initiatives should be launched to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, challenging cultural norms that prioritize boys' education and addressing issues like early marriage and safety concerns.

c. Incentives for Girls' Education: Providing incentives such as scholarships, school supplies, and meals for girls can increase their enrollment and retention rates. These incentives should be combined with community support programs that empower families to support their daughters' education.

### 7. Strengthening Partnerships and Coordination

a. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: Government agencies, NGOs, international organizations, and local communities must collaborate to create a unified strategy for improving education in IDP camps. Regular coordination meetings and joint action plans can help streamline efforts and resources.

b. Community Participation: Engaging community members, including parents and local leaders, in the design and implementation of educational programs can ensure that these programs are culturally relevant and sustainable. Community involvement also enhances ownership and accountability.

c. Establishing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks: A robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be put in place to assess the impact of educational interventions continuously. This framework should include indicators for infrastructure, teacher performance, student outcomes, and psychosocial support services.

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