

*Full Length Research*

# Arts And Crafts: Panacea for Sustainable Livelihood in Nigeria IDP Camps

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At the moment, records show that there are over 4 million internally displaced persons in Nigeria. This paper tries to define internally displaced persons as people who have been forced to flee their homes to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, violence, violation of human rights or natural/human made disasters and who have not crossed an internally recognized boarder. It is a descriptive study that used observation and interview to gather the data. The paper observed the challenges faced in IDP camps to include insecurity, insufficient supply of basic needs such as foods, medications and personal needs among others. It also discusses the meaning, types and materials of arts and crafts as used in the context of this paper. The paper also discusses the benefits of the proposed training on arts and crafts to the internally displaced persons to include making them self reliant and productive. It therefore concludes that the situation in IDP camps calls for a long term solution plan that goes beyond provision of immediate basic needs such as foods, and medications. It should rather be extended to acquisition of art skills to sustain the beneficiaries beyond their temporary stay in IDP camps. The paper recommends among others that the authorities concerned should provide all the needed logistics for training in arts and crafts to empower IDP for sustainable livelihood

**Keywords:** Arts and crafts, internally displaced persons, sustainable livelihood, IDP camps.

## INTRODUCTION

It is an undisputable fact that Nigeria as a nation is increasingly becoming unsafe for habitation, not only to expatriates but indigenes of the land due to insecurity resulting from violent crimes such as banditry,

kidnapping for ransom, communal clashes often originating from issues related to access to lands and socio-economic development. Among all the above listed, the latest and most devastating is the maiming

and indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens in their own communities by cartels of gunmen (Boko-Haram sect and herdsmen). At first, the mayhem started in the North East geo-political zone of Nigeria and had spread to almost all the other parts of Nigeria cutting across Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra, Imo and Abia States in the South East, as well as Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo and Osun States in the South West geo-political zones of Nigeria. Njoku and Nwachukwu (2015) observe that the North East geo-political zone of Nigeria comprising Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States have experienced the most adverse effects of insurgency leading to complete desertion of villages that are prone to attacks by insurgents. In addition, States in the North-central such as Benue, Kogi and Plateau suffer the same fate. The inhabitants in the communities have been maimed, and thousands killed. Presently, records by Tope (2019) show that between June, 2018 and May, 2019 over 7,253 Nigerians have lost their lives as a result of violent related activities. In the midst of this insecurity, victims who survive the attacks are either chased out of their ancestral lands or leave their villages for fear of subsequent attacks to seek for shelter and protection in internally displaced peoples' camps (IDP) provided by the state or federal governments (Mammas & Lawal, 2019). The internally displaced people according to the authors are people who became victims as a result of their vulnerability due to the absence of the requisite capacity of possessing the monopoly of the use of force to defend themselves (Lanshire and Yenda, 2016). As the crisis increases, so do IDP camps increase. The number of displaced persons originally meant for each camp is growing far beyond its capacity. Ironically, the makeshift arrangements which are supposed to be temporary are becoming permanent abodes because the crises have continued to reoccur rather than coming to an end.

However, the IDP camps were created by both the Federal and State governments. Some were also created by individuals and organizations with hearts of gold to ameliorate the sufferings of the victims. Some measures are also put in place to ensure adequate upkeep of the occupants. This paper tries to find out how arts and crafts can help internally displaced persons in various IDP camps sustain their livelihood under the following sub-headings.

- Who are the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)?
- What are the emerging challenges in IDP camps?
- What is visual arts and crafts?
- Benefits of visual arts and crafts to IDP.

### **Who are the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)?**

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are persons who are forced out of their permanent settlements to relocate in another location provided for them as a result of crisis or disaster which could be natural or man made. Lanshire and Yanda (2016), citing Landan (2006), describe them as a category displaced within a geographical location. Due to the displacements, their means of their livelihood such as agriculture, and trade are dashed out. Again, the United Nations Human Rights (2019) referring to the guiding principles on internal displacement, defines Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) as persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed any internationally recognized borders". However, it is necessary to note that internally displaced persons (IDP) leave the comfort of their homes but are still in the borders of their country. When there are such cases of natural or man-made disasters, people are evacuated from the restive locations and are meant to settle in makeshift camps for fear of subsequent attacks. However, the affected persons are meant to live in those camps for unspecified period of time until normalcy is restored in the affected areas. Unfortunately, the temporary arrangement of settlement (the camp) is no longer as short as could be perceived, due to the incessant and re-occurrence of the attacks. Therefore, displaced persons have been seen to almost living in the camps as many years as possible with issues emanating from time to time. It has been observed that about 2.3 million people are internally displaced in Nigeria at the end of 2018 (IDMC, 2009). While in 2019, 1.8 million Nigerians have fled their homes and are internally displaced (OCHA, 2019). However, as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, there are about 2.6 million IDP in Nigeria (IDMC, 2019), while (UNHCR, 2020) has put the figure to 3.3 million people.

### **Emerging Challenges in IDP Camps**

The old saying that "East or West, home is the best" is most applicable to displaced persons in IDP camps. They no longer enjoy the comforts of their home. Most of them lost everything they had worked for in life to the disaster that caused their evacuation

## 094. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

such as money, clothings, food, certificates and lots more. For this reason, they are faced with series of challenges in IDP camps ranging from shortage of foods, shelter, clothings, clean water and worst of all, depression. According to Nnamani (2017), there is a fair amount of challenges that are facing the IDP in Nigeria which include: insecurity, hunger, acute malnutrition, diseases and sexually transmitted diseases (STD). According to her, there is no adequate security, lots of women and girls are raped everyday with high chances of contacting STD, a lot of youths engage in various degrees of vices such as smoking of hard drugs and stealing. There is no money to buy sufficient food for everyone and people are starving to death. Out of the little food provided, the required nutrients are missing. This affects the growth of the children, gives them pale appearance and making them loose weight. In addition, the displaced persons see themselves as people without hope anymore because they have lost everything they have worked for in life. In their state of despair, they look upon the government to rehabilitate them with sustainable program that will give them a meaningful life. An inspection visit to Lugbe IDP camp and Kuje IDP camps both in Abuja reveal that the occupants live in unsecured make shift shelters prone to various forms of danger. When interviewed, some of them admitted that the quality of life in the camp is deteriorating drastically as a result of negligence by the authorities. The findings are not far from what Nnamani (2017) observed in her study.

In view of the above, durable solution for IDP and returning refugees according to UNDP (2017) is broadly understood to encompass 3 options:

- i) Voluntary return to places of origin.
- ii) Local integration in areas of displacement or
- iii) Resettlement in another location.

These are possible options which even when chosen, need to be backed up with sustainable programmes to help them overcome depression. This is so because Mamman and Lawal (2019) observe that occupants in Damare IDP camp in Yola town are still suffering from shock and psychological trauma caused by insurgencies which are still fresh in their minds. This cannot be ruled out in their present location (IDP camp). Displaced people wish to live a normal life of productivity as if they are in their ancestral homes. They wish they could go home and continue with their original occupations. Some of them are farmers, fishermen, traders, artisans and so on. Dali (2015) has remarked that farming activities have slowed down in the affected communities because farmers are being attacked while in the farm with their families being raped, killed and their produce set on fire.

However, it is difficult for them to carry out their professions including farming in the IDP camps because of some obvious inadequacies. It is also not possible for them to go back home in a short while because the insurgency has not ended. In that case, they need to push on with sustainable skills to make them remain productive members of the society. This is one of the measures that the government should put in place to help rehabilitate the internally displaced people and also help them overcome depression.

### What is Arts and Crafts?

These could be called decorative design and handicraft. Arts and crafts are two concepts that are often used interchangeably. Although the two are closely related, there exists a slight difference. Visual arts can be described as art forms which aim at creating works that could be perceived such as photography, crafts, video film making and architecture. Visual arts also include the applied arts such as graphic design, textile design, decorative arts, industrial design and interior design. In the words of Ikwuegbu (2012), visual arts represent those expressions from the artist which can be perceived through human optical activities: touch, emotions, senses and others which tend to affect aesthetic judgments, psychology, philosophy and conduct when confronted with works of arts. Ohuoba (2013) summarized it as a diverse range of human activities, creations and modes of expressions... Equally, craft is defined by Ikegwonu (2001), citing Collingwood (1975) as an occupation in which skills in the use of hands are needed. The major difference between visual arts and crafts is that the result of craft is preconceived and as a result can be mass produced using moulds or copying the original sample while artistic products are majorly creative objects which are not usually pre-conceived. Apart from the above slight differences, both of them are visual works of art that serve both aesthetic and utilitarian purposes. Invariably, all crafted works are visual artifacts but not all visual art works are crafts. Their functional values depend on the intention of the artist for producing them.

However, in the context of this paper, the two concepts are used as visual works of art. Talking about the benefits of arts, Agujuobi (2000) argues that visual arts play a very important role in the psychological upliftment of the human person and helps in creation of the ideas of society which they also foster and project. This implies that partaking in art activities either in creation or viewing can bring about emotional

pleasure. This is exactly the best reason for training the internally displaced persons in arts and crafts to enjoy emotional relief because of their distressed state of mind. In addition to the above, the beneficiaries will earn meaningful livelihood from the proceeds of their handiworks. If this is achieved, displaced persons will sustain their livelihood both in the camp and beyond their stay in the IDP camp. They will continue to practice the skills when they get back to their respective communities. Visual works of art which can be taught to internally displaced persons in order to empower them for sustainable living include works of Fine Arts such as drawing, painting, photography, sculpture and architecture. While works of Applied arts include ceramics, textiles, graphics or visual communication and architecture. In order to adequately carry out the training in arts and crafts in IDP camps, the basic requirements include firstly, to engage the services of visual artists as resource persons and secondly, the provision of art materials for demonstration, it is also important that the government should take a step further to provide materials not only for demonstration but also for production after training. This is the only way that the objectives can be achieved. The materials needed include:

**Drawing:** drawing boards, papers, pencils of different shades, charcoal.

**Painting:** colours of all kinds such as oil, emotions, water colour, acrylic, pastel oil, poster colour, coloured chalk, crayon, earth colours and vegetable materials (flowers and green leaves) canvass, brushes and frames.

**Sculpture:** the following materials are needed, wood, plasters, wax, bronze, paper mache, brass, stone, marble, clay, ivory, gold, silver, fibre, glass, cement, plastic materials and others.

**Graphics:** We need the following basic materials; wood, ink, pencil, lino cut, water colour, brushes, crayon, colour pencils, paper, canvas as well as cameras for photo shots (photography) and others.

**Textiles:** Basically, we need different types of fibres (silk, wool, cotton, synthetics, kapok, jute, raffia), loom, printing table, printing ink, water, poster colours, mesh, paper, dyes, animal skin and leather, knitting machines, starch, brushes, kerosene and cutters, sewing machine: tapes, scissors, beads of different colours and sizes for fashion and body adornment and others.

**Ceramics:** The following basic materials are needed; clay, water, mesh, concrete slab or wooden table, cutter, mortar and pestle, plastics, wood, wax, glazes, colourants, kiln.

**Architecture:** The materials needed include; mud, cement, sand, roofing materials, wood, glass, paint and so on.

Other areas of training include the making of crafts such as baskets, cane chairs/tables/rack/boxes/mats/hand fans, wooden spoons, and other wooden products such as pots, plates, chairs and tables, mortars and pestle, masks, calabash production and decorations. This aspect of craft is referred to as carving and decoration. It also includes the production of other decorative materials such as airport art and body adornment. Bead works for the production of fashion accessories like bracelets, bags, foot wears, hair bands, ties, key holders, flower vase, wall hangers, table covers and lots more.

### Benefits of Training on Visual Arts and Crafts to IDP

From the list above, it is apparent that the end products of arts and crafts are inexhaustible. If the initiative is adopted, Internally Displaced Persons in the camps will become self reliant. They will produce household materials like plates, window blinds, decoration stuffs, such as flower vases with beads, neck laces, bangles, earrings, ties, belts, leather foot wears and hand bags, beaded bags, and food wears, painted pictures, photo shots, posters, beddings, body wears, wall papers, key holders, cane chairs, cane racks, cane tables, hand fans, kitchen racks, baskets, mats, knitted cardigans, foot mats and lots more. They will equally make money from selling the products to sustain their livelihood. Naturally, IDPs have personal problems that may not be solved with what the government provides. Therefore, they need to be engaged in something that will help them generate revenue for them to solve their personal problems. This training will also help them to socialize with the environment. When they work together, they interact with each other. Again, it will help them to acquire skills to become productive members of the society instead of liabilities. This will also boost their self confidence. Their artifacts will be used to beautify the environment for adequate habitation and in-turn improves the aesthetic value of IDP camps. Their engagement in arts and crafts will help them overcome boredom and depression. Ordinarily, most of them feel depressed because they may have lost everything that they have worked for in their life time. For those of them in this category, constant manipulation of art materials will restore their hope and critical thinking. Viewing the art of others can also give rise to emotions within them and help them explore and interpret what they are feeling. At the same time, understanding their emotions can help to heal, grow and improve their psychological state (art therapy). This is supported by the Teacher

## 096. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

Education Project (U.P.E) (1977) which states that the arts are not just cultural embellishments, but most of them are activities which gave men psychological and mental satisfaction. It goes further to state that the recognition that art is a unique type of experience which makes special contributions to human experience need not rest upon political arguments. It can rest upon a factual appreciation that art is the only field that has a special mission of therapy since the time of cave dwelling.

### CONCLUSION

From the aforesaid, it is obvious that the internally displaced persons need much more than foods, clothings and medication. Most of them have lived in IDP camps much longer than necessary. Expectation is that they would go back home after a short while. On the contrary, most of them have been kept in the camps for a good number of years because the turbulence is not yet over. This situation therefore calls for a long term solution planning that will extend beyond their lives in IDP camps.

The government should embark on such programmes as training on arts and crafts to give the IDP a sustainable livelihood. This programme will not cost as much as the daily cost of running IDP camps if embarked upon with honesty. It will bring a lasting solution to the problem of IDP in Nigeria. When trained on arts and crafts, the internally displaced persons will not only be given fish by the government, but will be taught how to catch fish from the river so that they can catch and eat whenever they desire.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Federal government should as a matter of necessity, establish a Directorate of skills acquisition in the states where IDP camps are located. They will be in charge of training of various skills including arts and crafts to the IDP and ensure adequate organization, monitoring and supervision of the programme as well as uniformity.
- "Improvisation method" should be adopted strictly in the programme. This will ensure that materials needed are sourced from the environment such as cane sticks, clay, wood and vegetable dyes rather than buying imported ones. This will save cost for the government.
- The internally displaced persons should be motivated to partake in the programme. This is because they may not be willing to do so because of

their depressed conditions. Motivation strategies may either be in cash or kind.

- Adequate marketing arrangements should also be put in place for them to sell their finished products and generate money. If this is not done, the products will waste away after making them. This will discourage the producers drastically.

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