

An Analysis of Resettlement Strategies In Boko Haram Insurgency Affected Communities In Gujba Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria (2018-2022)

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Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency has caused a severe humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, resulting in over 20,000 deaths and the displacement of 2.6 million people. Although peace is gradually returning, the rehabilitation and resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain inadequate. This study assesses government and non-governmental strategies for resettling affected communities in Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State. Using surveys and interviews, the study found that existing approaches face major constraints, particularly in infrastructure, housing, security, and social services. Community-based initiatives, including the involvement of women and youth in peacebuilding, have supported recovery in some towns, but many households remain dependent on aid and lack access to education and livelihoods. The study recommends integrated resettlement strategies that combine infrastructural reconstruction, economic empowerment, and peacebuilding to ensure sustainable recovery and social cohesion in insurgency-affected communities.

Keywords: *Resettlement, Insurgency, Rehabilitation, Peacebuilding, Boko Haram*

Introduction

Terrorism has become one of Nigeria's greatest security challenges, with Boko Haram (Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah li-Da'awati Wal-Jihad) and its affiliate, ISWAP, driving instability since 2009. Concentrated in the North-East, their attacks on government institutions, religious centers, markets, and transport facilities have claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions, raising major concerns about governance, economic stability, and national security (Hurst & Co., 2015). Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa States have been the most affected, with Gujba Local Government Area in Yobe serving as the focal point of this study. The area has witnessed mass killings, abductions, gender-based violence, and large-scale displacement. Between 2014 and 2016, towns such as Buni Yadi, Goneri, Ngurbuwa, Katarko, Magza, Buni Gari, and Wagir were completely deserted. Even after residents began returning in 2018, communities continued to face severe challenges, including destroyed infrastructure, disrupted farming and trade, and heavy dependence on humanitarian aid from the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and non-governmental organizations. The insurgency's consequences extend beyond physical destruction to long-term socio-economic decline, with widespread loss of livelihoods, halted education, and weakened community cohesion. At the same time, local peacebuilding efforts particularly the involvement of women and youth in mediation and early warning have supported gradual recovery in some areas. This study therefore examines the resettlement and peacebuilding strategies in Gujba LGA, analyzing their effectiveness and limitations. It seeks to provide insights that will inform more sustainable policies for community rehabilitation, economic revitalization, and lasting peace in insurgency-affected areas of north-eastern Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is a global concern, often triggered by armed conflict, disasters, human rights violations, or development projects (Aspler,

2013). Such displacement disrupts livelihoods, dismantles social networks, and reduces living standards. In Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State, the Boko Haram insurgency forced mass displacement between 2014 and 2016. Since 2018, government and non-governmental actors have attempted partial, full, and integrated resettlement (Jibril, 2021), but these efforts lack consistent policy direction (Owei, 2020) and have produced limited outcomes, sometimes facing resistance from returnees (Ahmadu, 2017). This study examines the extent of resettlement implementation in Gujba, the challenges encountered, and the effectiveness of current strategies.

Objectives of the Study

1. Identify key factors affecting resettled populations in Gujba LGA.
2. Assess the effectiveness of integrated resettlement approaches.
3. Examine challenges confronting resettled communities.

Research Questions

1. What factors affect resettled populations in Gujba LGA?
2. How effective are integrated resettlement approaches?
3. What strategies can address challenges facing resettled communities?

Literature Review

Resettlement in conflict-affected communities faces serious challenges despite relative peace in some areas of the North-East. Boko Haram continues attacks including bombings, abductions, sexual violence, and forced recruitment, threatening security in Yobe State (Amusan & Oyewole, 2015). The insurgency has eroded social trust, weakened family and interreligious relations, and devastated infrastructure, leaving villages, schools, and businesses destroyed (Amusan & Ejoke, 2017). The crisis has displaced millions, created widows and orphans, and forced many into IDP camps or host communities (Amnesty International, 2017; Chibuike & Eme, 2019).

Most displaced persons were farmers and traders, making their absence a threat to food security. Beyond physical losses, victims suffer trauma, anxiety, and post-conflict stress, highlighting the need for psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and reintegration (Farouk, 2012; Adesina, 2013).

Methodology

The study employed a survey design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Methodology provides systematic procedures for collecting and interpreting data (Neuman, 2007; Tuli, 2010). Surveys are widely used in social sciences to capture large amounts of information on attitudes and social realities. This study applied descriptive methods, covering design, population, sampling, data collection, and analysis (Krathwohl, 1993).

Research Design

Research design is the framework guiding data collection and analysis (Awojobi, 2014). This study used an exploratory design to examine experiences and perceptions of insurgency and resettlement in Gujba LGA. Questionnaires and interviews were the main instruments.

Population of the Study Area

The study population is Gujba LGA, Yobe State, with 129,797 residents (72,310 males and 57,487 females) across ten wards (NPC, 2006). From this, ten respondents were randomly sampled using Cochran's formula, while 34 were purposively selected for interviews.

Sampling

Sampling reduces the cost and time of research by selecting a representative portion of the population. In qualitative studies, respondents are often chosen for their ability to provide rich, relevant insights. For this study, participants were selected based on their direct involvement in, or experience with, the insurgency and resettlement process.

Sampling Techniques

A total of 100 respondents were drawn using random sampling 10 individuals from each of 10 affected communities in Gujba LGA. These included household representatives and traditional leaders.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data were gathered through surveys conducted in both rural and urban areas of Gujba LGA. Structured questionnaires and key informant interviews were used to collect information on socio-demographic features, knowledge of resettlement, and recovery experiences.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Findings show that 65.8% of respondents were male and 34.2% female, suggesting men were more likely to be displaced due to vulnerability to direct attacks. Most displaced persons were young adults: 7.5% aged 20–29 and 30% aged 30–39. This age profile, critical for rural labor, underscores the long-term developmental impact of displacement. Marriage was common (60.8%), creating family-related pressures for reunification. Educational attainment was low, with 40% having only primary education and 29.2% no formal schooling, limiting livelihood options. Trading was the dominant occupation (49.2%), while household sizes were small, with 47.5% housing 1–3 people and 37.5% housing 4–6. Most respondents (86.4%) had been displaced for one to five years.

A. Gender of the Household Heads

The high proportion of the respondent are women, this may be linked to the usage of fertility regulation facilities and fertility-related victims. Male gender was involved in the study because they are part of the decision-making in fertility-related issues. This found to relate the study conducted by Orlunwu et al, (2011) that stated, "Some of the respondents felt the husband should solely decide on family planning, while some felt it was the wife/partner, and some felt it is a joint responsibility of husband and wife/partner".

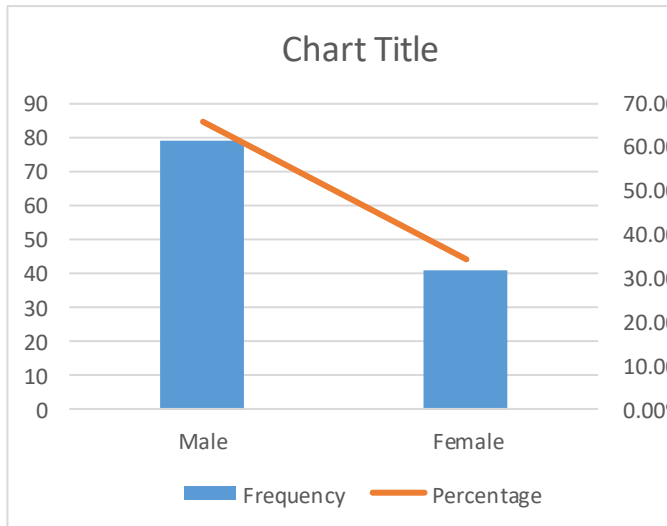


Figure 1: Figure 1: Gender distribution of household in Gujba LGA.
Source: Fieldwork 2020

B. Age of Household Heads

The ages of household heads ranged between 20 and 35 years, which corresponds with the reproductive age bracket of 15–49 years (Jacob & Akpan, 2015). The majority were 35 years and above, followed by those aged 20–29, with the overall mean age recorded at 29.6 years.

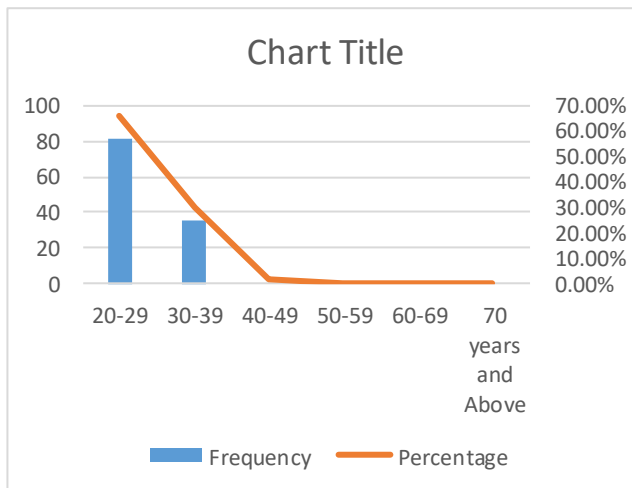


Figure 2: Age distribution of household heads in Gujba LGA
Source: Fieldwork 2020

C. Level of Education/Knowledge of Household Heads

The literacy level of respondents was generally low, and this has significant implications for resettlement. High rates of illiteracy may hinder the adoption of modern resettlement strategies,

as education often shapes attitudes toward change and recovery. This finding supports Jacob and Akpan (2015), who noted that illiteracy limits the use of modern resettlement methods. Similarly, better-educated individuals, particularly women employed in the modern sector, are more likely to embrace innovations such as family planning. In contrast, traditional values, lack of awareness, and poor access to healthcare remain barriers to education, health-seeking behavior, and effective resettlement.

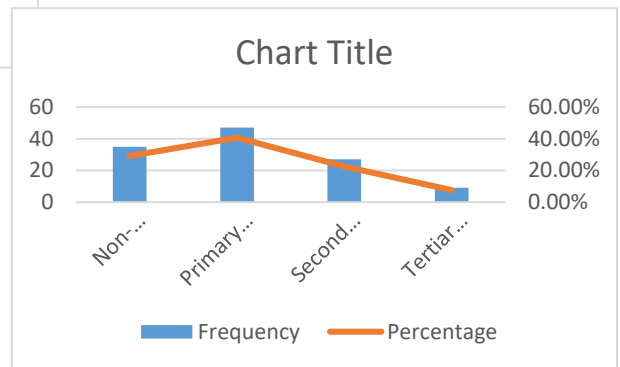


Figure 3:Figure 3: Educational Attainment of Household Heads in Gujba LGA.
Source: Fieldwork 2020

D. Marital Status of Household Heads

Findings show that most household heads were married (70.8%), while 18.5% were unmarried, 7.6% widowed, and 3.0% divorced. The predominance of marriage reflects the respondents' childbearing age, which also explains the relatively common use of fertility regulation methods. This result aligns with Danjibo (2009), who observed that the majority of respondents in similar contexts were married, Muslim, and educated to at least the secondary school level.

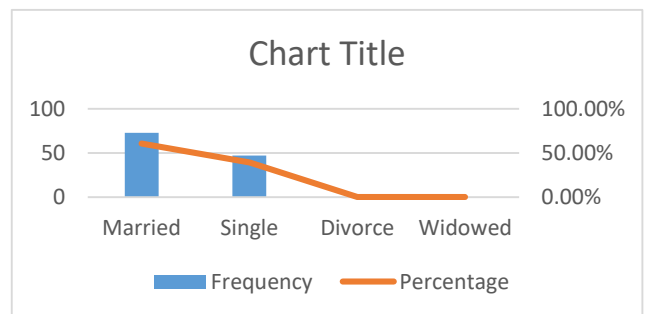


Figure 4: Marital status of the Household Heads in Gujba LGA.

Source: Fieldwork 2020

E. Occupation of the Household Heads

This shows that the high proportion of the respondent are unemployed and less paid job, this may be one of the factor militating against the use of a resettlement strategies. It have been stated in FGD that in most of the places, the facilities were provided for free but sometimes it requires money and mobility.

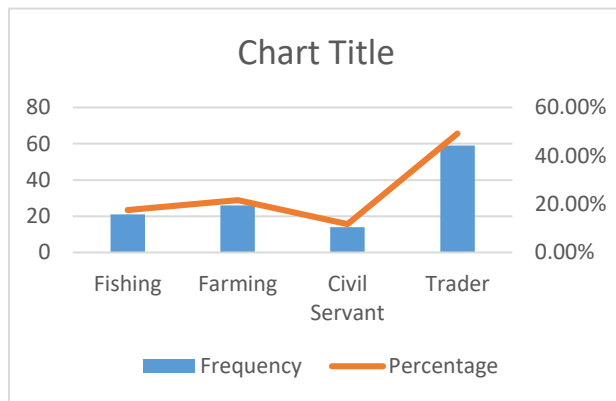


Figure 5: Figure 5: Occupational distribution of Household Heads in Gujba LGA.

violence and fostering long-term peace. Applied to the Boko Haram insurgency, as well as recurring ethno-religious clashes and farmer–herder conflicts in the North East, it underscores the need for both immediate and sustained efforts toward resettlement and reconciliation. Dugan (1997) describes conflict transformation as recognizing the inevitability of conflict while combining short- and long-term strategies to address its underlying causes. This requires moving beyond ending hostilities to actively reshaping relationships and creating conditions for peace. Similarly, Lederach (1999) argues that resettlement involves transforming relationships across multiple dimensions social, cultural, political, spiritual, and economic while involving actors at all levels: government leaders, community members, and grassroots leaders (Karbo, 2008). A critical challenge in this framework is the cost and scale of rebuilding war-torn societies. Post-conflict recovery in the North East demands extensive reconstruction of education, health, transport, and public infrastructure, alongside social services.

Table 1: Overview of Recovery and Peace-Building Needs by Components [In Million US Dollars]

Components	Adamawa	Borno	Yobe	Gombe	Taraba	Bauchi	Fed/Reg.	Total
Peace-Building and social cohesion	28	38	23	14	19	24	6	152
Infrastructure and Social Services	595	3933	668	129	145	203	95	5768
Economic Recovery	38	69	31	22	28	41	245	474
Total	660	4040	722	165	192	268	345	6392

Source: FGN North East, Nigeria Recovery and Peace- Building Assessment; 2015.

Resettlement Efforts in the North East from the Conflict Transformation Approach

The conflict transformation approach emphasizes addressing the root causes of

Yet, as Gamawa (2017) and Galtung (1964) note, the cessation of physical violence alone does not ensure sustainable peace; without addressing structural inequalities and fostering “positive peace,” violence can easily recur.

The 2015 North East Recovery and Peace-Building Assessment highlights that social services and infrastructure account for the largest share of recovery needs, with Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe the most affected due to the intensity of Boko Haram’s devastation. Economic recovery was also flagged as critical, particularly in Borno, Bauchi, and Adamawa. Although peace-building and social cohesion were identified as less capital-intensive, they remain indispensable for long-term stability. Overall, sustainable resettlement in the North East requires a pragmatic, multi-dimensional strategy that integrates physical reconstruction with social healing and inclusive peace-building processes.

What is observable from the needs breakdown as obtained in the table above indicates that social services infrastructure recovery and peace-building needs critically engulfed the highest in total. In addition, Borno followed by Adamawa and Yobe States have higher needs per individual state, perhaps due to the overwhelming devastation caused by the Boko Haram insurgency. Equally, the economic recovery component in the worst-hit States as obtained in the table revealed that Borno, Bauchi, and Adamawa require serious economic recovery. Going forward, the peace-building and social cohesion need of the components is the least, based on the assessment conducted in the report. This does not suggest that peace-building and social cohesion are the least prioritized because it is more intangible components while the social services and infrastructure components are physical and indeed concrete need that is capital intensive in terms of investment.

Furthermore, it appears that peace-building efforts in both short-term and long-term processes in the North East demand a pragmatic approach. The above table attempt to address the components needs of the region according to

States, as of 2015, a recently humanitarian needs for selected clusters in 2017, dish out a four-year plan appeal as indicated in the table below.

Table 2: Overview of Humanitarian Needs for Selected Clusters Based on 2017 Appeal (in Million Dollars)

Clusters/Sector	2017 Appeal [US Dollars]	4-Year Programme [US Dollars]
Early Recovery and Livelihood	44,553,589	178,214,356
Food Security	480,260,433	1,921,041,732
Health	93,827,598	375,310,392
Nutrition	110,268,668	441,074,672
Protection	88,274,151	353,096,604
Water and Sanitation	49,736,246	198,944,984
Total	866,920,685	3,467,682,740

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking System 2017

As humanitarian situations in the North Eastern region deteriorate due to displacement and damage to infrastructure while the conflict rages, it produced an adverse effect on the productive sector of the economy like agricultural production, which is tied to food security, and by extension, it may affect the nutritional requirement of the population. As observed from the table above, the cluster on food security in the four-year plan is close to 2 billion US Dollars followed by nutrition, which perhaps correlates with food production. As stated earlier in the background of the paper, the North Eastern region has about 1,794,400 ha under cultivation according to the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS, 2018]. Unfortunately, a sizeable portion of this arable land could not be cultivated due largely to the displacement of many villages and towns, especially in the most affected states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Health, water, and sanitation, if properly transformed as peace-building efforts in the

North East, will go a long way in addressing humanitarian situations, thereby encouraging productive ventures going by the popular adage that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. Other areas as it appears on the table in the cluster of physical protection, early recovery, and livelihood are equally having a direct bearing on peace building in the North East.

Be that as it may, the cluster needs above is an appeal plan for four years from 2017, what would be required is the commitment to adhere to it and by extension successfully implement it as at when due. Moreover, the passage of the North East Development Commission [NEDC] bill and its subsequent signing into law, would serve as albatross to the plight of the humanitarian needs of the people especially the internally displaced. The NEDC would help greatly in long-term planning for reconstruction, resettlement, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

As the Boko Haram, insurgency over time attracted the attention of the international community, many collaborative efforts internationally and assistance in military hardware and funds have been on for some time. For instance, below is a graphical presentation of international humanitarian assistants [both appealed and funded] to help rebuild the North East damaged by the war as well as peace-building efforts processes from 2014 to 2017.

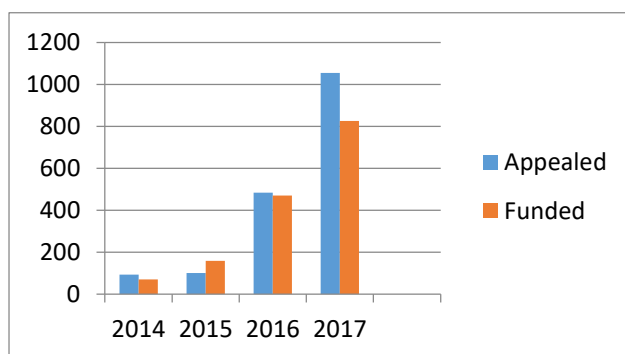


Figure 6: Figure 6: Levels of International Humanitarian Assistance to North East Nigeria, 2014-2017 [Appealed vs funded, in millions US dollars].

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking System [FTS]

Adopted by Famine Response and Prevention in North East, Nigeria It is observed that the levels of international humanitarian assistance over the years have steadily risen from less than 200 million in 2014 to well over 1 trillion US Dollars by appeal in the preceding year 2017, even though the funded intervention is a little above 800 million US Dollars. Away from the humanitarian perspective, it has been observed that the Nigerian government and its armed forces have since 2010 tried to put a stop to the operation and sustained attacks of the Boko Haram group but have not been able to do so despite arrests and killings of many of the Boko Haram fighters in different encounters. However, substantially, the spate of attacks has reduced to a minimum, especially after the 2015 general elections. While the preceding government tried to address the challenges by increasing the defense budget from 100 billion in 2010 to 927 billion in 2011 and 1 trillion in 2012, 2013, and 2014 respectively [Gamawa 2017], yet, it was incapacitated in the requisite strategy to defeat the insurgents.

By this graphic evidence, as depicted above, it is worthy of note that peace is priceless, but once shattered regaining it requires a huge investment in both human and material components of the intervention. It also clearly shows the level of commitment from both the government and the international community in addressing the plight of the people. As argued by former UN Secretary-General Kofi in his Agenda for Development report, 2004, he posits that the requisite for peace-building effort is pegged on sustained cooperative work on the underlying economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems [Annan 2004]. Going by this context advanced by Annan, sum up the holistic and pragmatic approach to peace-building invariably should be pegged on both short-term and long-term processes.

Humanitarian Challenges and Recovery Efforts in the North East

The prolonged conflict in the North East has displaced millions and destroyed vital infrastructure, creating severe humanitarian and

economic consequences. Agriculture, the backbone of local livelihoods and food security, has been particularly affected. The National Bureau of Statistics (2018) reported about 1.79 million hectares of arable land in the region, much of which remains uncultivated due to mass displacement in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Consequently, food security has been heavily compromised, with the four-year appeal plan estimating nearly \$2 billion in needs for food security, followed closely by nutrition. Beyond agriculture, health, water, and sanitation services are critical peace-building priorities. Proper investment in these areas would significantly improve humanitarian conditions and restore productivity, reflecting the adage that “a healthy nation is a wealthy nation.” Similarly, clusters on physical protection, early recovery, and livelihood directly influence peace-building and social stability. While the 2017–2021 appeal plan outlined these needs, its effectiveness depends on strong commitment and timely implementation. The establishment of the North East Development Commission (NEDC) offers a structured framework for long-term reconstruction, resettlement, rehabilitation, and reintegration. International support has also played an important role. The Boko Haram insurgency drew global attention, prompting collaborations that provided military assistance, humanitarian aid, and development funds. Between 2014 and 2017, significant international contributions were mobilized to support recovery and peace-building initiatives in the region.

Humanitarian Challenges and Recovery Efforts in the North East

The Boko Haram insurgency has displaced millions and devastated agriculture, leaving much of the 1.79 million hectares of arable land uncultivated (NBS, 2018). Food security and nutrition needs alone were estimated at nearly \$2 billion in the 2017–2021 appeal plan. Health, water, sanitation, early recovery, and livelihood are equally critical for rebuilding peace and stability.

The success of recovery efforts depends on timely implementation and sustained commitment. The creation of the North East Development Commission (NEDC) provides a framework for long-term reconstruction, resettlement, and reintegration. International partners have also contributed funds and military assistance, though funding gaps remain.

Famine Response and Prevention in North East Nigeria

International humanitarian assistance rose sharply from under \$200 million in 2014 to over \$1 trillion appealed in 2017, though actual funding was about \$800 million. Despite increased defense spending since 2010, the Nigerian government has struggled to fully defeat Boko Haram, though attacks have reduced since 2015. This highlights the high cost of restoring peace and the critical role of both government and international partners in addressing the crisis. As Kofi Annan (2004) argued, peace-building must be anchored on addressing economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian foundations through both short- and long-term strategies.

Strategic Approaches to Infrastructure and Services

Post-conflict recovery requires phased interventions: securing areas, stabilizing communities through essential services, and long-term reconstruction. Priorities include clearing war remnants, rebuilding housing and transport networks, restoring education and healthcare, and supporting livelihoods. Recovery must also strengthen social cohesion, justice, and community safety. Key sectors include energy, environment, ICT, water and sanitation, education, health, housing, and social protection.

Institutional Effectiveness

Strong institutional arrangements are vital. Leadership must come from federal, state, and local governments with active involvement of communities and civil society. Mechanisms such as community forums and grievance

redress systems can ensure accountability and inclusion. The Recovery and Peace Building Strategies (RPBS) should build on existing structures like the NEDC and state ministries, ensuring flexibility, transparency, and professional implementation.

Resettlement Policy Strategies

Resettlement whether voluntary or involuntary must consider both physical and socio-economic needs. Policies should ensure fair compensation, livelihood restoration, and protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and minorities. Effective resettlement should minimize disruption, support reintegration, and uphold the principle of participatory development.

Felt Needs of Communities

Community perceptions are central to resettlement success. In Gujba LGA, residents preferred total resettlement, reflecting cultural concerns about integration with outsiders. Partial resettlement was acceptable to some, but integration was largely rejected. Overall, current strategies have failed to meet felt needs, fueling resistance. Policy revisions are required to better align with community priorities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although relative peace has returned, communities remain burdened by poverty, destroyed livelihoods, and lack of services. If unaddressed, these conditions may trigger renewed unrest. The study recommends:

Ending the insurgency and addressing its root causes.

Providing basic social amenities (water, electricity, healthcare, schools, housing).

Supporting livelihoods through financial aid, skills training, and farm inputs.

Strengthening anti-corruption oversight in resettlement programs.

Promoting reconciliation, forgiveness, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives.

Enhancing coordination among government, NGOs, and donor agencies.

Ensuring women and youth participation in recovery processes.

Expanding cultural, educational, and technological platforms for peace and early warning systems.

The Way Forward

The IDP crisis must be treated purely as a humanitarian issue, not politicized. Effective resettlement, rehabilitation, and reintegration require synergy between government and non-state actors, recognition of IDPs as human assets, and promotion of self-reliance. With coordinated planning and genuine commitment, recovery in the North East can restore dignity, peace, and sustainable development.

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