

From Policy to Practice: Examining the Implementation of Protection Mechanisms in Conflict-Induced IDP Camps in Maiduguri, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. Despite the existence of national and international protection frameworks, IDPs in Maiduguri continue to face significant protection challenges, including insecurity, gender-based violence, limited access to basic services, and weak institutional coordination. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study draws on primary data from IDP camp residents, camp managers, government officials, and humanitarian actors, complemented by secondary data from policy documents and reports. The findings reveal that while protection policies are robust on paper, their implementation is constrained by inadequate funding, capacity gaps, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and the complex security environment. The study concludes that effective protection of IDPs requires strengthened institutional coordination, community-based protection strategies, and sustained political commitment. Recommendations are offered to enhance policy-to-practice alignment and improve protection outcomes in Maiduguri IDP camps.

Keywords: *Internally Displaced Persons, Protection Mechanisms, Conflict, Policy Implementation, Maiduguri, Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement has become one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges globally, particularly in regions affected by protracted conflict. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in the displacement of millions, with Borno State and Maiduguri in particular hosting a large concentration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In response, the Nigerian government, in collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has developed several protection mechanisms aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of IDPs. Protection mechanisms refer to policies, legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, and operational strategies designed to prevent, mitigate, and respond to protection risks faced by displaced populations. Despite these frameworks, evidence suggests that IDPs in Maiduguri camps continue to experience protection deficits, raising concerns about the effectiveness of policy implementation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although Nigeria has adopted various national and international protection instruments, including the Kampala Convention and the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, the lived realities of IDPs in Maiduguri suggest a significant implementation gap. Persistent cases of exploitation, inadequate security, limited access to justice, and poor living conditions indicate that protection mechanisms are not fully translating into practice. This disconnect necessitates a systematic examination of how protection policies are implemented within IDP camps.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced IDP camps in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify existing protection policies and mechanisms applicable to IDP camps in Maiduguri.

2. Assess the extent to which these protection mechanisms are implemented in practice.

3. Examine challenges affecting the implementation of protection mechanisms.

4. Propose strategies for improving protection outcomes for IDPs.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What protection mechanisms are in place for IDPs in Maiduguri camps?

2. How are these mechanisms implemented at the camp level?

3. What challenges hinder effective implementation of protection mechanisms?

4. How can the implementation of protection mechanisms be strengthened?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to academic discourse on forced migration and protection by bridging theory and practice. It also provides policymakers, humanitarian actors, and development partners with evidence-based insights to improve protection interventions for IDPs in Maiduguri and similar conflict settings.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on selected conflict-induced IDP camps within Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government Area of Borno State. Thematically, it examines protection mechanisms related to security, gender-based violence, access to services, and institutional coordination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

This chapter reviews relevant concepts, theories, and empirical studies related to the implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced IDP camps, with specific reference to Maiduguri, Borno State. The review establishes the analytical

foundation for understanding the gap between policy intent and practical outcomes.

2.1.1 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, particularly as a result of armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. Unlike refugees, IDPs remain under the jurisdiction of their national governments, which places primary responsibility for their protection on the state. In Nigeria, internal displacement has been largely driven by the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer–herder conflicts, and communal violence. Maiduguri has emerged as the epicenter of displacement in the North-East due to its relative security and presence of humanitarian infrastructure.

2.1.2 Conflict-Induced Displacement

Conflict-induced displacement refers to forced population movements resulting directly from armed conflict and insecurity. Such displacement is often sudden, prolonged, and characterized by repeated cycles of movement. In Borno State, the insurgency has destroyed livelihoods, social networks, and local governance structures, making return and reintegration difficult.

2.1.3 Protection Mechanisms

Protection mechanisms are legal, institutional, and operational measures designed to prevent and respond to protection risks faced by vulnerable populations. In IDP camps, these mechanisms include physical security arrangements, access to justice, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child protection systems, camp governance structures, and complaint and referral mechanisms.

2.1.4 Policy Practice Gap in Humanitarian Protection

The policy practice gap refers to the disconnect between formal policy commitments and actual

implementation on the ground. While Nigeria has ratified international conventions and adopted national policies on internal displacement, the translation of these frameworks into effective protection outcomes remains inconsistent due to structural, institutional, and contextual constraints.

2.2 Legal and Policy Framework for IDP Protection

2.2.1 International Legal Frameworks

Key international instruments guiding IDP protection include the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), which outline the rights of IDPs and the responsibilities of states, and international human rights and humanitarian law provisions applicable during armed conflict.

2.2.2 Regional Framework: Kampala Convention

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention, 2009) is the first legally binding regional instrument on internal displacement. It obligates state parties, including Nigeria, to prevent displacement, protect IDPs, and provide durable solutions.

2.2.3 National Policy Framework in Nigeria

Nigeria's National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons assigns responsibilities to federal, state, and local governments, with agencies such as NEMA, SEMA, and camp management committees playing central roles. However, implementation remains weak due to limited legal enforceability and resource constraints.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory prioritizes the protection of individuals rather than the state, emphasizing freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity. The theory identifies multiple dimensions of security, including personal, economic, health, food, environmental, and political security. In the context of Maiduguri IDP camps, the theory provides a lens for assessing

whether protection mechanisms address both immediate physical threats and long-term socio-economic vulnerabilities. It also highlights the importance of participatory and people-centered protection strategies.

2.4 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Empirical studies on IDP protection in Nigeria and other conflict-affected regions consistently reveal gaps between policy commitments and practical delivery. Research highlights challenges such as inadequate funding, weak coordination among humanitarian actors, militarization of camps, and exclusion of IDPs from decision-making processes.

Studies focusing on North-East Nigeria emphasize persistent protection risks, particularly for women and children, including SGBV, child labor, and exploitation. However, evidence also suggests that community-based protection initiatives and improved coordination can enhance protection outcomes.

2.5 Research Gap

While existing studies address IDP protection broadly, limited research specifically examines the implementation dynamics of protection mechanisms within Maiduguri IDP camps. This study fills this gap by focusing on the policy-to-practice interface and identifying context-specific implementation challenges and opportunities.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine flooding dynamics in Borno State.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study is conducted in selected flood-prone communities within Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and surrounding Local Government Areas in Borno State.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population comprises households affected by flooding, government officials, disaster management agencies, and community leaders.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique is employed. Purposive sampling is used to select flood-prone areas, while random sampling is applied to household respondents.

3.5 Research Instruments

Data are collected using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Secondary data are obtained from official reports and academic publications.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Content validity is ensured through expert review, while reliability is tested using a pilot study and Cronbach's alpha method.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative data are analyzed thematically.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation are strictly observed throughout the research process.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed data presentation and analysis of findings from the field study on the implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced IDP camps in Maiduguri, Borno State. Data are analyzed in line with the study's research objectives and questions. Quantitative data obtained through questionnaires are presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data from key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) are analyzed thematically and used to complement quantitative findings.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics are presented in tables and figures to provide a clear overview of the background of respondents.

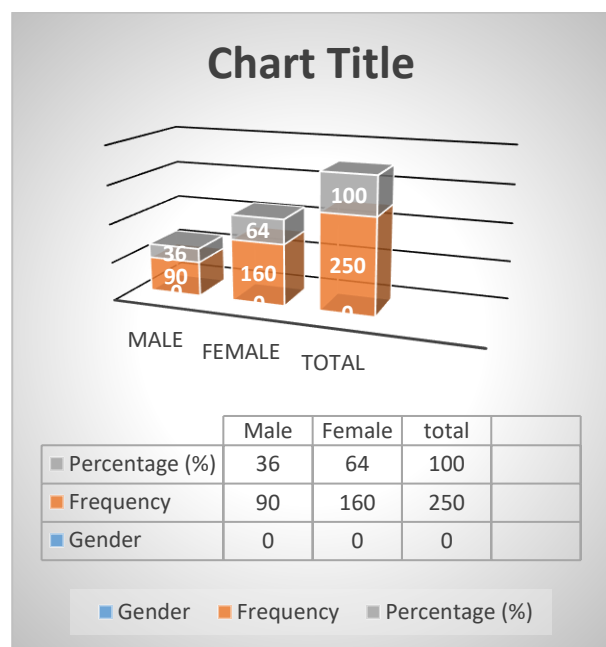


Figure 4.1: Bar chart showing gender distribution of respondents.

The figure indicates that females constituted the majority of respondents (64%), reflecting the gender composition of IDP camps in Maiduguri and the disproportionate impact of displacement on women.

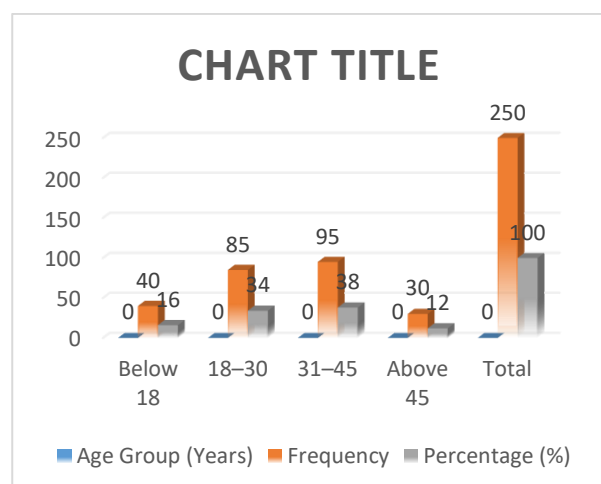


Figure 4.2: Bar chart showing age distribution of respondents.

The data show that most respondents (72%) fall within the 18–45 age bracket, indicating that displacement significantly affects the economically productive population.

Table 4.3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	95	38.0
Primary Education	80	32.0
Secondary Education	55	22.0
Tertiary Education	20	8.0
Total	250	100.0

The table reveals low educational attainment among respondents, which limits awareness and utilization of protection mechanisms.

Table 4.4: Length of Stay in IDP Camps

Length of Stay	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	30	12.0
1–3 years	70	28.0
4–5 years	90	36.0
Above 5 years	60	24.0
Total	250	100.0

The data confirm that the majority of respondents (60%) have lived in the camps for over four years, indicating protracted displacement.

4.3 Awareness of Protection Policies and Mechanisms

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness of existing protection policies and mechanisms within the camps.

Quantitative analysis shows low awareness of formal protection frameworks such as the National IDP Policy and the Kampala Convention. Most respondents associated protection primarily with physical security presence. Awareness of legal aid services, GBV reporting channels, and child protection mechanisms was significantly lower.

Qualitative data from FGDs reveal that awareness is largely driven by NGOs through sensitization programs, while government-led awareness initiatives remain minimal.

4.4 Types of Protection Mechanisms Available in Maiduguri IDP Camps

The study identified several protection mechanisms operating within the camps:

4.4.1 Physical Security Mechanisms

These include military patrols, police presence, and civilian security outfits. While respondents acknowledged improved security compared to earlier years of the insurgency, concerns were raised about limited coverage during night hours.

4.4.2 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Protection Mechanisms

GBV desks, referral pathways, and survivor support services were reported in some camps. However, utilization remains low due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of confidentiality.

4.4.3 Child Protection Mechanisms

Child-friendly spaces, psychosocial support services, and informal education programs were identified. Respondents noted positive impacts but emphasized inadequate coverage relative to the child population.

4.4.4 Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms

Complaint desks and suggestion boxes exist in many camps, but respondents expressed skepticism regarding follow-up and accountability, leading to underreporting of protection incidents.

4.5 Level of Implementation of Protection Mechanisms

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of protection mechanisms in their camps.

Quantitative results indicate that a majority rated implementation as inadequate to moderate. Physical security received higher ratings than legal and social protection services. Many respondents reported delays in response to reported incidents,

while others indicated that some cases were ignored entirely.

Qualitative findings further reveal that implementation is largely reactive rather than preventive, with interventions often triggered only after serious incidents occur.

4.6 Challenges Affecting Implementation of Protection Mechanisms

Analysis identified multiple challenges hindering effective implementation:

Inadequate and inconsistent funding for protection activities

Shortage of trained protection personnel

Weak coordination among government agencies and humanitarian actors

Overcrowding and pressure on limited resources

Persistent insecurity around camp perimeters

Key informants emphasized that bureaucratic bottlenecks and politicization of humanitarian assistance further weaken protection delivery.

4.7 Implications of Findings for Policy and Practice

The findings demonstrate a significant policy–practice gap in the implementation of protection mechanisms in Maiduguri IDP camps. While policy frameworks exist, their translation into effective protection outcomes remains limited.

Consistent with Human Security Theory, the analysis shows that emphasis on physical security alone is insufficient. Comprehensive protection must address dignity, participation, access to justice, and socio-economic well-being.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the study, draws conclusions based on the findings from data analysis, and offers detailed recommendations aimed at improving the

implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced IDP camps in Maiduguri, Borno State. The recommendations are policy-oriented and grounded in empirical evidence generated by the study.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study examined the implementation of protection mechanisms in conflict-induced IDP camps in Maiduguri, Nigeria, with a specific focus on the gap between policy provisions and practical realities. The research was motivated by persistent protection challenges faced by IDPs despite the existence of national, regional, and international protection frameworks.

Using a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from IDPs, camp officials, government agencies, and humanitarian actors through questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The Human Security Theory provided the theoretical framework for analyzing protection beyond physical security to include dignity, participation, and access to justice.

5.3 Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Existence of Protection Frameworks: Nigeria has adopted several protection frameworks, including the Kampala Convention and the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. However, awareness of these frameworks among IDPs remains low.
2. Uneven Implementation: Protection mechanisms are implemented unevenly across Maiduguri IDP camps. Physical security measures are relatively visible, while legal, social, and psychosocial protection mechanisms are weak.
3. Low Awareness and Utilization: Most IDPs lack adequate knowledge of complaint mechanisms, legal aid services, and GBV response systems, leading to underreporting of protection incidents.
4. Institutional and Resource Constraints: Inadequate funding, limited trained personnel, weak coordination among actors, and bureaucratic

bottlenecks significantly hinder effective implementation.

5. Policy Practice Gap: There is a clear disconnect between protection policies and outcomes on the ground, confirming the central argument of this study.

5.4 Conclusion

The study concludes that while protection policies for internally displaced persons in Nigeria are robust on paper, their implementation in Maiduguri IDP camps remains largely ineffective. Protection efforts are heavily skewed toward physical security, with insufficient attention to other critical dimensions of human security such as dignity, participation, and access to justice.

Without deliberate efforts to strengthen institutional capacity, improve coordination, and ensure sustained political commitment, protection mechanisms will continue to fall short of their intended objectives. Bridging the gap between policy and practice is therefore essential for improving the welfare and rights of IDPs in Maiduguri.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

5.5.1 Policy and Legal Recommendations

Domestication and enforcement of the Kampala Convention should be strengthened through clear legal backing at federal and state levels.

The National IDP Policy should be reviewed to include enforceable implementation guidelines and accountability mechanisms.

5.5.2 Institutional and Administrative Recommendations

Government agencies such as NEMA and SEMA should strengthen coordination with humanitarian actors through regular joint planning and information-sharing platforms. Dedicated protection units staffed with trained personnel should be established in all IDP camps.

5.5.3 Capacity Building and Awareness

Continuous training should be provided for camp managers, security personnel, and protection officers on rights-based protection approaches. Awareness campaigns should be intensified to educate IDPs on their rights and available protection mechanisms.

5.5.4 Community-Based Protection Strategies

IDPs should be actively involved in camp governance and protection decision-making processes. Community-based protection committees should be strengthened to promote early warning and peer accountability.

5.5.5 Funding and Sustainability

Sustainable and predictable funding should be allocated specifically for protection activities.

Long-term development interventions should be integrated with humanitarian responses to reduce dependency and vulnerability.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the literature on internal displacement by providing empirical evidence on the policy practice gap in IDP protection within a conflict-affected context. It extends the application of Human Security Theory to IDP camp settings in North-East Nigeria.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by security constraints, which restricted access to some camps, and reliance on self-reported data, which may be affected by recall bias. However, these limitations do not significantly undermine the validity of the findings.

5.8 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should explore comparative analyses of IDP protection mechanisms across different states in Nigeria and assess long-term outcomes of community-based protection initiatives.

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