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# **CHILD RIGHT ABUSE AND THE RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED CHILDREN IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT), ABUJA, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

In 1989, the UN member states, including Nigeria, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. In 2003, the Child Rights Act became domesticated, even though not all the states in Nigeria have fully complied. According to the convention, a child is someone who is under the age of 18 and should be free to enjoy fundamental human rights, including the right to education, the right to speech, the right of choice-of-life, and the right to association without discrimination based on color, sex, race, religion, or language. In Nigeria, since the activities of Boko Haram insurgents, bandits, kidnappers, cultists, and other criminal elements became intense, many citizens have fled their homes to IDP camps, among whom are children. The first IDP camps were set up in the FCT in 2014, and by 2015, the nation's capital witnessed proliferations of official and unofficial camps. The study adopted the conceptual analysis approach. The study discovered that the rights of children in IDP camps in the FCT are gruesomely abused, such as sexual abuse, gender-based violence, child marriage, trafficking, and most worrisome alms begging. It concludes that despite interventions from the government, NGOs, and individuals, children still face rights abuses in IDP camps across the state. Therefore, the study recommends that the Nigerian government should strictly comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Keywords:** The Child, Human Rights, Convention and Internally Displacement.

## **Introduction**

All over the world, people, including children, are displaced from their homes due to insecurity and natural disasters. While some take solace in refugee camps after struggling to migrate, others run to internally displaced camps within, while others lose their lives, especially children who may not withstand harsh environmental conditions. By doing so, the children's rights to life could be thwarted. This has raised concerns and worries and drawn the attention of concerned world bodies. For example, the United Nations Humanitarian Commission on Refugees (UNHCR, 2007; cited in Ojo, 2018) estimates that about 25 million people fall into these categories among the world population; Africa shares a significant figure of about 12.8 million people displaced, while Nigeria has about 5 million people suffering displacement. As of June 2023, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) identified a total of 2,295,534 IDPs in 471,346 households and 2,075,257 returnees in 341,895 households.

In response to protecting the rights of children, especially those who are displaced from their homes, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by the UN's General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of

November 20, 1989. This UN convention, which was adopted to address the rights of children all over the world, was in line with the 10 December 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which made it clear that the rights of a child ought not to be taken for granted by member states, including Nigeria. Thus:

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world; bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom; recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status; recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement (UN Convention on Child Rights, 1990, p.1).

Also, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of Guiding Principles in 1998 as a tool for the prevention and management of internal displacement by nations all over the world and as a guide for all governmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors working with internally displaced persons. These guiding principles were endorsed by all West African Nations at the First Conference of West African States on Internal Displacement, which took place in Abuja from April 26–28, 2006. The UN's guiding principles on displacement laid the foundation for the African Union Convention for Assistance and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, which was adopted at the African Union Summit on Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons in Kampala, Uganda, in October 2009 (Tanimu, 2013).

While in Nigeria, the Child Rights Act 2003, which was drafted to ensure that the rights of the child, whether internally displaced or not, ought to be protected at all times, was incorporated into Nigeria's National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, mooted by the National Commission for Refugees, where a draft was prepared in 2003. According to Ella-Ejeh (2017), the foremost Internally Displaced Persons Camp (IDP camp) was setup and approved by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) in 2014. And by 2015, there were just four IDP settlements in Abuja, but the number has increased to over 30. Some of the notable settlements include Gongola/Karimajiji settlements, Waru settlement, Yemetu, Zinda, New Kuchigoro, Apo, Wasa, Dabga, Area One, Bwari, and Lugbe settlements, among others.

Ella-Ejeh further asserted that there may be negligence on the part of the federal government in

protecting the rights of the child, for which it (FGN) became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the African Union Convention on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons and the Rights of the Internally Displaced, which was signed in Kampala in 2009. As a signatory to these conventions, one would assume that the rights of the child, especially the IDP children, would have been the topmost priority of the Federal Government of Nigeria. On the contrary, Beland (2021) states that in 2021, there were over 15 thousand (15,000) internally displaced persons scattered in various IDP camps in the FCT, Abuja, the majority of whom are children, whom Nigeria swore to protect. And these camps have young children between the ages of 6 and 15 who ought to be in school. Some of the children, according to Beland (2021), are subjected to sexual abuse, gender-based violence, street hawking, alms begging, house help, early marriage, and other forms of child rights abuse.

Despite this, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in October 2022, about 20 million children were still out of school in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2022). Children who are out of school could have been denied their rights to education and a better life and could still be facing child rights abuses. And this may portend danger to society because uneducated children, abused children, dehumanized children, and psychologically damaged children often end up in groups of gangsterism, cultism, banditry, Boko Haram, kidnappers, armed robbery gangs, rapists, and unknown gunmen, amongst others, which could fuel more insecurity and human rights abuses in the near future. Therefore, this study, with the use of conceptual analysis in addition to several existing pieces of literature on the UN Convention on Children's Rights, Internal Displacement, and the Challenges of Managing Child Rights Abuse in IDP Camps, delved into providing conceptual analysis to such challenges and possible prospects.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the rights of children as enshrined in the United Nations Convention?
2. How are these children's rights protected in IDP Camps in the FCT?
3. What are the challenges mitigating the protection of children's rights in IDP Camps in the FCT as contained in the UN Convention?

## **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

The focus of this paper is inspired by the conceptual analysis research method. Therefore, concepts such as children, human rights, conventions, and internal displacements are discussed accordingly.

## **THE CHILD**

While the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not contain a definition of who a child is, the Labour Act defines the child as "a young person under the age of 12 years," while the Children and Young Person Act gives a different definition of a child to be a person "under the age of 14 years." According to the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, "a child is a human being below 18 years old, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child also defines a child as a person below 18 years old, except where in the law applicable to the child the age of majority is attained earlier (Iguh & Nosike, 2016, p. 4). In summary and by implication, a child is referred to as a citizen of a nation below the age of 18 and is popularly referred to as a minor in most cultures.

In another definition, Akolokwu and Nwauzi (2019) defined a child as a human being between the stages of birth and puberty, or between the developmental period of infancy and puberty. They also stated that the definition of a child generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of an adult. To this end, children seem to have fewer rights and responsibilities than adults. They are assumed to be unable to make serious decisions. Considering these definitions and meanings of who a child is, it could be safe to say that when there is insecurity or a natural disaster, the people who suffer most are children. This is because they may not be able to make drastic decisions. However, while many of the children suffer casualties, is because some are captured and subjected to further human rights abuses such as sex trafficking, forced early marriages, being sold as slaves or house help, and alms begging (like in the case of alamajiris), while others are rescued and taken to refugee or internally displaced person camps. And even at IDP camps, some of the children face sexual abuse, leading to unwanted and premature pregnancies.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Over time, we have heard things like “where one's rights stop is where another's begins.” In Nigeria, this could be taken as the best definition of human rights. Notwithstanding, the definition of human rights has no universal acceptability. Rights could also be legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed or owed to people according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory (Portes & DeWind, 2004).

Section 39 down to Section 48 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly spells out several fundamental rights of every Nigerian, ranging from the right to freedom of movement, association, worship, choice of life, and freedom to own properties anywhere in the country. By implication of these sections, any child or minor found hawking, begging alms on the street, forced into early marriage, sexually abused by older adults, domestically abused, or forced into child labor has had his or her rights abused and violated. And if a government cannot provide secured IDP camps where children who are displaced or who fled insecurity or natural disasters settle, then such government may have violated the rights of children and contravened signed treaties and conventions, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for which every member state is a signatory, including Nigeria.

## **CONVENTION**

A convention is a set of agreed, stipulated, signed, or generally accepted or adopted standards, norms, social norms, values, or criteria, often taking the form of a custom—something binding by mutual agreement. One of the most commonly cited conventions in the world is the United Nations Convention on Rights, including the Convention on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), and the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. The term "convention" is used in international law to refer to certain formal statements of principles, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Conventions are adopted by international bodies such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations. Conventions so adopted usually apply only to countries that ratify them and do not automatically apply to member states

of such bodies. These conventions are generally seen as having the force of international treaties for the ratifying countries (Halilu & Siliki, 2017).

The best-known of these are perhaps the several Geneva Conventions. Usually, when there is a prevailing and perceived occurrence of human or natural activities inimical to humans for which there has been uproar around the world, global or regional bodies such as the UN, AU, ECOWAS, EU, and NATO would call for a convention to discuss such issues and come up with a solution by way of deliberation or debate. The resolution is therefore adopted, signed, and agreed upon by my member states and is to be implemented by way of domestication. In 2014, when over 200 Chibok girls were abducted by Boko Haram insurgents, a campaign tagged #BringBackOurGirls went global, forcing the enforcement of certain conventions and treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory for the release of the children and to prevent further violations of the rights of the child in Nigeria.

## **INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

Internal displacement can refer to a situation whereby people are forced or involuntarily leave their homes to settle at a refugee camp or IDP camp within a territory. While the term “refugee” has a recognized legal definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention, there is no universal legal definition of internally displaced persons (IDP); only a regional treaty for African countries (the Kampala Convention). However, a United Nations report, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, defined IDPs as persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes 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 an internationally recognized state border (Okon, 2018).

On August 24, 2022, the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defined IDPs merely as people who need help outside their homes. The definition of IDPs has two major components, which are the coercive or involuntary character of movement and the fact that such movement takes place between national borders (Durosaro & Ajiboye, 2011). However, this definition has been criticized as more descriptive than legal because internally displaced persons have no binding international convention dedicated by the United Nations Agency charged with their protection and assistance (Ellen & Kudzai, 2014). The very reason internal displacement has attracted little concern comparatively to refugees is that both IDPs and refugees are subjected to the same conditions of psychological imbalance, financial instability, vulnerability, human rights violations, and even the suppression of children or minors, in which case their deaths could be unaccounted for.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Benson and Achanso (2022) investigated “The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Child Rights Promotion in Ghana.” In their study, the main objective was to investigate the rights of children in Ghana and how such rights are promoted as they relate to the exact rights of children enshrined in the UN Convention. According to them, children's rights in Ghana include the right to basic education, social welfare, the right to freedom of expression, the right to protection from social vices and insecurity, and the right to freedom from sexual abuse, amongst others. Benson and Achanso (2022) further asserted that a child, as contained in the 1992



Constitution of Ghana and the Children's Act (Act 560), is someone below 18 years of age.

Unlike in Nigeria, there is a Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Policy in Ghana to protect the rights of children to freedom of education, and this puts the age for the completion of free compulsory education in Ghana (that is, the basic level of education) at 16 years. To ensure that children enroll and complete this level of education, the government of Ghana introduced the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy. Benson and Achanso (2022), stated that the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana protects children from any form of domestic and sexual violence, whether such child is found in IDP camps or anywhere else within the Ghanaian territory. According to Barnes (2009), under Articles 4, 5, 11, 18, and 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, children are to be accorded parental guidance, parental responsibilities, and protection from abuse and neglect. The formulation of the principles of the Convention, which draw from Articles 2, 3, 6, and 12 of the Convention, includes the following: the principle of equality and non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival, and development; and participation rights (Barnes, 2009).

In a study carried out by Adeola and Benyam (2021), it is argued that, while article 23(4) requires that both refugee children and IDCs ought to be accorded the same protection from a rights-based perspective, it also requires that the protection of IDCs should be construed with reference to the Kampala Convention of 2009 in Uganda, which is the most recent applicable regional convention governing internal displacement in Africa for which Nigeria, as a nation, is signatory. The protection of and assistance for internally displaced children (IDC) in Africa has been one of Africa's most pressing or challenging human rights issues. Children are one of the most affected categories of persons, given the implications of displacement orchestrated by insecurity, violence, man-made and natural disasters, or government-forced eviction (Adeola & Benyam, 2021).

There are many displaced children in several IDP camps in the FCT, Abuja. Without disputing the efforts of the FCT administration and the federal government in general, UN foreign aid workers were mobilised to educate the children in accordance with home education curricula and are further integrated into their academic systems after basic stages in camps. IDP children have the freedom to attain their full potential through childcare and guidance. Therefore, NGO's and Ministries of Humanitarian Affairs of host countries collaborate to train children on various skills. According to Adeleye (2022), the Adamawa Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development facilitated a mid-year review meeting for child rights protection actors in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states, which took place on Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and which led to the deployment of female officers of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps to boost the confidence of children and protection in various IDP camps in the states. Adeleye also affirmed that the state ministries partnered with various NGOs and other government agencies to provide exercise books, school uniforms, and skill acquisition materials for the children. This was to ensure that the rights of the children, though violated, do not deteriorate.

In survey research that adopted the focus group discussion method of data collection tagged "International Bodies Responses to Emergency Situations in Northern Nigeria," The Human Rights Watch (2014) revealed that on May 7, 2014, following the Chibok girl's abduction, the



Nigerian government, with support from the United Nations, Nigerian business leaders, the African Development Bank, and other international organizations, launched the Safe Schools Initiative with the goal of making Nigerian schools safer for children. This was to align with the UN convention on the rights of the child, including the right to education.

Amina and Ibrahim (2019), in their study titled “*The Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Unofficial Camps in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja,*” examined and identified the remote and immediate causes of violations of the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Abuja and how best to remedy them. The study also examines how well the provisions of the Kampala Convention have been applied in view of the fact that Nigeria has yet to domesticate and adopt the Convention into Nigerian law. According to Amina and Ibrahim (2019), the main challenge faced by children in IDP camps in the FCT, including unofficial camps, has always been that no budget provisions have been made in respect of the IDPs and therein flows the inability to provide for the needs of children at various IDP camps. The budget of the Ministries of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster, Education, Women Affairs, and even agencies like the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ought to reflect protecting the rights of vulnerable women and children in displaced camps by way of providing their basic needs. The inability to provide adequate food, shelter, medical facilities, and care all stem from this root cause. This shows the level of challenges militating against the achievement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as enshrined by Nigeria in the “Nigeria's Child's Rights Act of 2003.

Atata and Egolun (2020), in their study “Examination of Challenges in the Provision and Management of Facilities in Selected Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Abuja,” discussed that the internally displaced persons camp has become synonymous with discomfort, suffering, and pain. Despite the facilities challenges in these camps, the major emphasis is on the accommodation, security, health and educational facilities. The news of several donations made by the government and other individuals contradicts the pleas and complaints made by the displaced, as it is expected that the facilities announced to be provided for them should be able to cater for the displaced during the period of their displacement. However, treatment in IDP camps in Nigeria is yet to conform to guiding principles, as rights are nastily redefined through inadequate supplies of basic needs, deprivations, and abuses resulting in unfavorable living conditions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on Liberal Citizenship Theory and is meant to justify the reason every citizen, including children, has the right to freedom of expression and dignity to life as a legal citizen of Nigeria. And so, even if they were displaced from their homes due to insecurity or natural disasters, they could still live up to their rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The study finds relevance with the liberal citizenship theory, which explains that citizens of a country such as Nigeria have social and political dimensions of human beings as something essential as well as a part of the construction of their own identity (Herbermas, 1992). The liberal theory also sees citizens as having the right to live anywhere in a country, move freely without restrictions, and enjoy all other rights defined by the constitution. Being a citizen has to do with the existence of a political structure and the existence of institutions that conform to it (Macedo, 1990).

As citizens of Nigeria, we may be tested when we are faced with serious emergency situations, like the case of people who have to flee their homes to escape death. These people find themselves in conditions they may not wish for their enemies. The frustration, pain, anger, and restiveness that come with not knowing where to lay one's head is unimaginable. Also, not knowing where the next meal will come from can be devastating. While this theory implies that no one, irrespective of their predicament, should be denied living anywhere they want to, provided they are not hindering others from doing their businesses.

In the FCT, for example, there are many official and unofficial IDP camps. This means that the latter are not recognized by the FCT administration. Sometimes, this occurs when registered camps no longer accept more fleeing citizens. And these displaced persons are forced or left with no option but to find any available open space to settle. In this case, young children are sent to the streets to beg for alms and food items by their parents or guardians. This may just be connected to the large number of *alamajiri* children on the streets, while others are sexually abused, raped, sold for modern-day slavery, and others are forced into early marriages. Relatedly, the liberal citizen theory is thus applied in this scenario, in which displaced citizens of Nigeria ought to be granted access to a place to settle and certain basic help rendered to them. This is not because their newfound temporal homes belong to them, but because they are citizens and have equal rights as everyone else.

A little concern from the government for the IDP children would reignite their sense of belonging (citizenship). Just as NGOs and faith-based organizations occasionally donate basic items to IDPs, the government can also do better. Being an IDP is not a crime on its own. And so, this theory reminds us of our roles as citizens of this nation: to lend helping hands to others in need in order to make them feel like liberal citizens. The rights of the child ought not to be taken away or denied to them. It has always been said that children are the leaders of tomorrow.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the conceptual analysis research approach. This approach to research methodology provides for a dissection of concepts as categories of events, objects, relationships, and properties (Furner, 2004). It was further explained by Furner (2004), cited in Inobemhe, Garba, Udeh, and Santas (2023), that the conceptual analysis approach has to do with providing meanings for a given concept through specifying and identifying specific conditions under which a phenomenon or entity can be classified. In other words, providing explanations for concepts and putting them in perspective necessitates (Inobemhe et al., 2023). This study, therefore, looks at the specific rights of a child as contained in the UN Convention on the Child's Rights and those of those children in IDP camps in the FCT, Abuja.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by member states, including Nigeria. First, the convention defined a child as anyone under the age of 18 years, regardless of body size, maturity rate, sex, color, creed, religion, or territory. The summary of these rights is that every child must be recognized, respected, and protected as a right holder of a country and as a unique and valuable human being. Therefore, the four core principles of the rights of the child are: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life; survival

and development; and respect for the views of the child.

One of the means to violate the rights of children in any society is insecurity, including violence, rape, sexual abuse, forced marriages, and trafficking, while other children are exposed to natural disasters, thereby making them fall into the hands of abusive adults. While those who could make their way to IDP camps are further subjected to inhumane treatment, In 2014, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) announced the establishment of IDP camps in Abuja. And by 2015, there were over 20,659 IDPs in FCT originating from Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Today, the number of IDP camps and IDPs in the FCT cannot be uniformly ascertained because of several unofficial camps scattered around the seat of power. And so, the fate of children, women, and other vulnerable people are left in the hands of local residents.

According to Oluwabunmi, Niyi, and Olanike (2022), just like several democratic societies around the globe, the basis of the protection of the Nigerian child is enshrined in Section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) and Chapter 4(4), which protects and guarantees the fundamental rights of every individual. Particularly, Nigeria is a signatory to both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990 (ACRWC). Consequent upon this, Section 12 of the Nigerian Constitution requires all ratified treaties to be domesticated into Nigerian law before they can become applicable, which led to the Nigerian legislature enacting the Child's Rights Act (CRA) in 2003. The resolution and assenting of this law give an ample number of rights to the Nigerian child, including the right to development, the right to grow up in a family environment, and the right to education, among others, in sections 4, 8, and 15 respectively (Oluwabunmi, Niyi, & Olanike, 2022).

While trying to protect the rights of all Nigerian children, the Child Rights Act, in Section 1, provides that the best interests of the child shall be of paramount consideration in all actions concerning a child. Furthermore, Section 3 provides for and upholds the fundamental human rights of the child as guaranteed by Chapter 4 of the Nigerian Constitution. Among the unique rights guaranteed are the right to survival, development, name, right to private and family life, freedom of movement, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, freedom from discrimination, right to dignity, right to health and health services, right to free, compulsory, and universal primary education, and the right of a child in need of special protection measures (Oluwabunmi, Niyi, & Olanike, 2022). By looking at these provisions and specifications of the rights of the Nigerian child, one would assume that, despite the proliferation of the IDP camps in the FCT and other parts of the country, orchestrated by prevailing security challenges, the federal government would step up its protection of the rights of the child. But the opposite is the case, as children, especially those in IDP camps and those left to litter the streets begging for alms, are left to their fates.

Basically, this study found out that some of the challenges faced by children in IDP camps in the FCT are complete violations of the fundamental human rights guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Rights Act of 2003, and even the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended. Some of these prevailing challenges faced by children in various IDP camps in the FCT include but are not limited to, a lack of proper

documentation. Some of the IDPs lost their documents while fleeing security threats in their homes. Some do not even remember their full names, the names of their parents, or their states. And the impact is that finding jobs and attending school becomes difficult. Another challenge observed is the issue of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), in which some vulnerable women and girls report having been sexually abused (raped) and/or abducted even before arriving in FCT. Consequent upon this, due to the regrettable stigmatism surrounding such sexual and gender-based violence, silence among female IDPs and little children has become the norm. Also observed are inherent risk factors for exploitation of women and girls in the camps because they lack basic things to meet their basic needs.

During the campaigns leading to the 2023 general elections, many political parties, candidates, and their supporters visited these IDP camps to provide relief materials and to seek votes. But for how long could those materials, such as food items, mattresses, clothes, sanitary pads, and cooking utensils, sustain the IPDs. This question remains unanswered since the elections are over and everyone has returned to base. Another challenge confronting children and vulnerable women in IDP camps in the FCT is psychosocial support services; that is, many IDPs expressed having undergone severe psychosocial distress in escaping violence and still experiencing it throughout their displacement in camps. There is no systematic and coordinated practice that exists to link IDP children with family members who have been abducted or whose whereabouts are not known. This includes the lack of a tracing system for separated and unaccompanied children, thereby contradicting the postulations of the citizen liberty theory adopted for the study.

In addition, there is a lack of periodic and sustainable assistance being rendered to IDP children in various camps in the FCT. However, few of the supports for IDP children in FCT are being provided solely by informal individual donors. This is making life unbearable for children, who are not only forced to resort to alms begging but are also subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, early marriage, and even domestic slavery. Considering these challenges, it may be safe to say that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Rights Acts of 2003 in Nigeria, and all the principles agreed to uphold may have been dashed to the wind.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that indeed, children in IDP camps across the nation, including the FCT, are deprived of their rights, despite the UN Convention and the domestication, though not fully implemented, of the Child Rights Act 2003 in Nigeria. However, in the past, especially in 2015, 2016, and 2019. Substantial efforts were made by FEMA, concerned ministries, FCTA, international humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and private individuals, but with the non-stop and increasing cases of insecurities in northern Nigeria, the middle belt, and the central parts of the country, there have been an increasing number of fleeing children and women to unofficial camps. And there has been an increase in demand for help, for which assistance and attention are not commensurate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To put an end to child abuse in IDP camps and to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child and the Child Rights Act 2003, the federal government, through its ministries and agencies such as FEMA and FCTA, should carry out proper documentation for all

IDPs in various camps. This is to enhance their reintegration into society and to easily trace their family members. Also, adequate security measures should be put in place to safeguard children from sexual abuse, forced marriage, child labor, alms begging, and trafficking, among others. There should be strict adherence to punishment for gender-based violence offenders by the government, and the Nigerian government should also domesticate all treaties and conventions.

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