

Beyond Policy Promises: Assessing Legal Rights and Protection for Internally Displaced Women in Niger State, Nigeria

Aisha Dangana¹, Kamar Hamza, PhD², Ahmed Mohammed Letswa, PhD³ and Danjuma Yahuza Izom, PhD⁴

Abstract

Internal displacement in Nigeria affects over 3.6 million people, with women comprising 55% of this population. Despite Nigeria's ratification of the Kampala Convention and adoption of a National IDP Policy, significant gaps persist between legal protections and lived realities. This phenomenological study examines how internally displaced women (IDW) in Niger State access legal rights and protection mechanisms. Through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with 20 displaced women and 2 stakeholders, conducted between July-August 2025, a documentation of systematic rights denial across four dimensions: legal invisibility (near-zero awareness of rights); service exclusion (healthcare, education, shelter inaccessible); institutional abandonment (policy-practice gaps); and political marginalization (exclusion from decision-making and justice). Drawing on human rights theory, feminist legal scholarship, and social contract frameworks, the paper argue that displaced women exist in a condition of "rightlessness" possessing legal entitlements that remain unenforceable due to institutional weakness, patriarchal governance, and state abdication of responsibility. Unlike northeastern Nigeria's insurgency-driven displacement, Niger State's crisis stems from resource-driven banditry linked to illegal mining, creating distinct dynamics requiring context-specific responses. The study contributes original empirical evidence from an under-researched context and demonstrates how multiple axes of marginalization; gender, poverty, displacement status, and ethnicity; compound to produce unique vulnerabilities. Findings underscore the urgent need for gender-responsive legal literacy programs, strengthened state-level enforcement mechanisms, and participatory governance structures including displaced women's voices.

Keywords: internally displaced women, legal rights, Kampala Convention, Niger State, protection mechanisms, gender-based violence, human rights, Nigeria

¹⁻²⁻³⁻⁴Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State – Nigeria

Introduction

Over 75.9 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced within their own countries by the end of 2023, with conflict, violence, and disasters serving as primary drivers (IDMC, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria hosts one of the largest internally displaced populations, approximately 3.6 million people, uprooted primarily by armed conflict, communal violence, and environmental disasters (IOM, 2023). Within this crisis, women and children constitute the majority, yet their specific vulnerabilities and protection need remain inadequately addressed in both policy and practice.

This article examines a critical yet under-explored dimension of Nigeria's displacement crisis: how do internally displaced women access their legal rights and protection mechanisms? While comprehensive international and national frameworks exist such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), the Kampala Convention (2009), and Nigeria's National IDP Policy (2012), empirical evidence increasingly reveals profound gaps between normative commitments and implementation realities (Ferris, 2018; Olanrewaju et al., 2019). Displaced women, facing compounded vulnerabilities from gender inequality, economic marginalization, and forced migration, often find themselves trapped between policy promises and lived deprivation.

Niger State, located in Nigeria's North Central zone, has emerged as a critical displacement hotspot since 2015. Unlike northeastern Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgency drives displacement, Niger State's crisis stems primarily from armed banditry linked to illegal mining operations, a resource-driven conflict with alleged elite complicity (Osasona, 2022; Kamar et al., 2022).

As of 2024, over 21,000 people remain displaced across the state, with women constituting approximately 55% of this population (UN-IDP-Atlas, 2024). Yet Niger State receives far less scholarly and policy attention compared to the northeast, creating significant knowledge gaps about displacement dynamics, gendered experiences, and protection failures in this region.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to address three interconnected gaps in displacement governance literature in relation to its objectives.

The study objectives are:

First, it provides empirical evidence from an under-researched geographic context (Niger State's North Central region), moving beyond the northeastern focus that dominates Nigerian displacement scholarship.

Second, it centers women's voices through phenomenological inquiry, capturing lived experiences often obscured in statistical reports or policy documents.

Third, it examines the operationalization of rights, not merely whether policies exist, but whether displaced women know about these rights, can access them practically, and have recourse when violations occur.

Drawing on human rights theory, feminist legal scholarship, and social contract frameworks, this paper argues that displaced women in Niger State exist in a condition of "structural rightlessness" that is they possess legal entitlements under national and international law, yet these remain systematically unenforceable due to institutional weakness, patriarchal governance structures, and deliberate state abdication of responsibility. This rightlessness is not accidental but reflects deeper political-economic dynamics where displacement serves elite interests through resource extraction while rendering affected populations invisible and expendable.

Review of the Literature

❖ Conceptual Foundations: Rights and Protection in Displacement

The concept of "rights" in displacement contexts encompasses multiple dimensions often conflated in policy discourse. Legal rights refer to formal entitlements codified in constitutions, statutes, or treaties. Human rights denote universal moral claims grounded in human dignity, independent of legal recognition. Protection mechanisms include both formal institutions (courts, ombudspersons, security services) and informal safeguards (community networks, cultural norms) that enable rights realization (Shue, 1980; Donnelly, 1989). For internally displaced persons, this conceptual complexity intensifies. Unlike refugees who cross international borders and enter specialized protection regimes, IDPs remain within state jurisdiction, theoretically retaining full citizenship rights (Cohen & Deng, 1998). Yet displacement disrupts the practical conditions through which rights are exercised; access to documentation, knowledge of entitlements, physical proximity to institutions, and social capital necessary for navigating bureaucracies (Ferris, 2014).

Recent scholarship emphasizes that rights access requires not merely formal recognition but institutional capacity, political will, and social legitimacy (Goodale, 2007; Merry, 2006). Even robust legal frameworks fail when states lack capacity (weak institutions), commitment (competing priorities), or legitimacy (distrust between displaced populations and authorities) to implement them. This insight shifts analysis from legal texts to implementation politics which involves the power relations, resource flows, and accountability mechanisms that determine whether rights remain "paper promises" or lived realities (Moyn, 2010).

❖ **International and Regional Frameworks: The Kampala Convention**

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) represent the first comprehensive articulation of IDP rights, defining displaced persons as those "forced or obliged to flee...who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (UNOCHA, 1998, p.5). The principles reaffirm that IDPs retain all rights enjoyed by non-displaced citizens under international human rights and humanitarian law, including rights to life, dignity, security, adequate housing, health, education, and freedom from discrimination. Critically, the Guiding Principles are "soft law" that are non-binding standards relying on voluntary state compliance (Mooney, 2005).

This has generated sustained scholarly debate. Proponents argue that "soft law" allows flexibility while building international consensus (Orchard, 2014). Critics contend that without enforcement mechanisms, states, particularly those implicated in causing displacement, evade accountability (Cantor, 2018; Kälén, 2020).

Recognizing this limitation, the African Union adopted the Kampala Convention in 2009, which entered into force in 2012. As the world's first legally binding regional instrument specifically addressing internal displacement, the Kampala Convention obligates state parties to prevent displacement, protect IDPs during displacement, and facilitate durable solutions, including voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement (African Union, 2009).

The Convention includes pioneering gender-specific provisions. Article 9 recognizes that "women and girls are often more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination and exploitation" and mandates states to adopt "special measures" for their protection, including:

- Ensuring women's participation in planning and managing camps (Art. 9.2.c);
- Providing gender-sensitive health services including reproductive healthcare (Art. 9.2.d);
- Protecting women from gender-based violence (Art. 9.2.e);
- Issuing documentation to women regardless of marital status (Art. 13.1).

These provisions reflect feminist critiques that gender-neutral policies often perpetuate existing inequalities by failing to address women's distinct vulnerabilities and needs (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000; Freedman, 2016).

Despite its progressive framework, empirical studies reveal significant implementation gaps. Research in Uganda, an early Kampala Convention ratifier, found that displaced women continued facing "limited access to legal protections, inadequate health services, and social stigma" despite policy commitments (Okello, 2021, p.58). Similarly, studies in the Democratic Republic of Congo documented systematic sexual violence against displaced women, exacerbated by weak governance and impunity (Mukwege & Nangini, 2019). Kenya's experience shows displaced women "struggle with economic integration due to discriminatory customary practices and limited financial support" (Oucho, 2020, p.119). These patterns suggest that across Africa, progressive legal frameworks coexist with persistent implementation failures rooted in weak institutions, limited resources, corruption, and entrenched patriarchal norms (Adepoju, 2022; Adeleke, 2021).

Nigeria's Displacement Governance Architecture

Nigeria ratified the Kampala Convention in 2012 and subsequently developed the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (revised in 2021). This policy provides a comprehensive framework aligned with international standards, emphasizing prevention, protection during displacement, and durable solutions. It explicitly recognizes women's and children's particular vulnerabilities, calling for gender-sensitive programming and protection from sexual and gender-based violence (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

However, Nigeria's federal structure complicates implementation. While the federal government establishes policy, responsibility for IDP welfare often falls on state and local governments, which may lack capacity, resources, or political will to enforce protections (Olanrewaju et al., 2019). Moreover, the National Policy lacks legislative

backing, it remains a guideline rather than an enforceable law, limiting accountability mechanisms (Eweka & Olusegun, 2016).

Empirical research documents persistent policy-practice gaps. Afolayan et al. (2021) found that women in northeastern Nigeria's IDP camps experienced "significant levels of sexual exploitation, insufficient reproductive healthcare, and economic marginalization" despite policy provisions. Edeh and Olanrewaju (2022) noted that while the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) provides legal protections against gender-based violence, enforcement is weak due to "cultural norms and limited state intervention" (p.242).

Recent scholarship emphasizes that Nigeria's displacement governance suffers from institutional fragmentation (Nwaorgu & Orsaa, 2023). Multiple actors the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI), State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMA), local governments, and humanitarian organizations, share overlapping mandates without clear coordination mechanisms. This creates accountability vacuums where each actor disclaims responsibility while displaced populations remain unserved (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

Gendered Dimensions of Displacement: Feminist Critiques

Feminist scholars argue that displacement governance has historically been gender-blind, treating IDPs as a homogenous category while ignoring how patriarchal structures shape women's vulnerabilities and rights access (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000; Parashar, 2014). This critique aligns with broader feminist analyses demonstrating that formal equality in law does not guarantee substantive equality in practice, particularly for marginalized groups (Fraser, 2009; Nussbaum, 2000). Research consistently shows that displaced women face gender-specific harms including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced marriage, restricted mobility, loss of property rights, and exclusion from decision-making (UN Women, 2023; Hossain et al., 2021). A systematic review focusing on African contexts revealed that 48.2% of refugee and internally displaced women experienced GBV, significantly higher than non-displaced populations (BMC Public Health, 2024). Risk factors included young age, economic dependency, alcohol use, and breakdown of protective community structures (Wirtz et al., 2014; Tadesse et al., 2024).

Yet despite this evidence, humanitarian responses often fail to prioritize women's needs. Lokot et al. (2023) found that displacement interventions frequently overlook reproductive health, psychosocial support, and economic empowerment for women, perpetuating dependency and vulnerability. Moreover, women's exclusion

from camp governance and resettlement planning means policies are designed without their input, reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics (Sooka, 2018; Meger, 2016).

Recent feminist scholarship employs intersectionality to demonstrate that displacement experiences vary not only by gender but through intersections with class, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, and other identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Cho et al., 2013). For instance, young unmarried women face different risks than elderly widows; Muslim women navigate different mobility constraints than Christian women; women from rural farming backgrounds confront different economic barriers than urban traders. This intersectional lens reveals that "displaced women" are not a monolithic category but comprise diverse subjectivities requiring differentiated responses (Hyndman & Giles, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to take all these factors into account when formulating and implementing policies.

Situating Niger State: Geography, Context, and Scholarly Gaps

Most Nigerian displacement research focuses on the Northeast (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe states) due to the Boko Haram insurgency that has displaced over 2 million people since 2009 (Campbell, 2021; Matfess, 2017). This geographic concentration, while understandable given displacement scale, has created knowledge gaps about displacement dynamics in other regions, particularly the North Central zone where Niger State is located. Niger State's displacement crisis differs from the Northeast in several respects: First, displacement drivers diverge. While Boko Haram's ideological insurgency drives northeastern displacement, Niger State's crisis stems primarily from banditry linked to resource exploitation, particularly illegal mining (Osasona, 2022; Kamar et al., 2022). Stakeholders interviewed for this study alleged elite complicity in displacement, wealthy actors allegedly sponsor armed groups to seize land for mining, then profit from mineral extraction while displaced communities remain in camps. This political economy dimension requires investigation but remains largely unexplored in displacement literature.

Second, ethnic and religious composition differs. Northeastern IDP camps predominantly house Kanuri Muslims displaced by Boko Haram. Niger State camps contain ethnically and religiously diverse populations, Gbagyi Christians from Shiroro, Hausa Muslims from Rafi, Mariga, creating distinct social dynamics, potential for inter-group tensions, and varying relationships with host communities.

Third, settlement patterns vary. While northeastern displaced populations often remain in formal camps for extended periods, Niger State shows higher rates of

informal settlement in host communities (78% according to NSEMA, 2022). This affects service access, social integration, and livelihood strategies in ways underexplored in literature.

Fourth, media and policy attention are asymmetric. Northeastern displacement receives substantial national and international coverage, humanitarian funding, and government attention. Niger State's "quiet crisis" remains relatively invisible despite escalating displacement since 2015 (Kamar et al., 2022).

This invisibility itself warrants scholarly attention of what political-economic interests does it serve?

Existing scholarship on Niger State focuses primarily on security dynamics and socioeconomic impacts of banditry (Kamar et al., 2022; Osasona, 2022) but does not systematically examine how displaced populations, particularly women, access legal rights or navigate institutional protection mechanisms. This study fills that empirical and geographic gap.

Theoretical Debates: Rights, Agency, and Resistance

Recent critical scholarship questions whether rights frameworks adequately capture displaced persons' experiences and aspirations. Some scholars argue that rights discourse, rooted in liberal individualism and state-centrism, may obscure alternative forms of solidarity, collective action, and non-state protection mechanisms that displaced populations actually rely on (Ticktin, 2011; Fassin, 2012). Anthropologists document how displaced persons often navigate survival through informal networks, kinship ties, religious communities, ethnic associations, rather than formal rights claims (Jansen & Löfving, 2009). Some feminist scholars caution against romanticizing rights, noting that legal frameworks can be "empty signifiers" that legitimate state power while delivering little substantive change (Brown, 1995; Hesford & Kozol, 2005).

Yet others contend that dismissing rights frameworks risks abandoning displaced populations to discretionary charity rather than enforceable entitlements (Merry, 2006; Goodale, 2007). From this perspective, the problem is not rights frameworks per se but their non-implementation, and research should expose this gap to demand accountability (Ignatieff, 2001). This study engages both perspectives. This paper takes seriously feminist critiques that rights frameworks may be inadequate or co-opted. Yet it also recognises that displaced women in Niger State consistently articulate demands in rights language: "we deserve healthcare," "our children

deserve education," "we deserve dignity." Dismissing these claims as "false consciousness" or "liberal ideology" would be patronising. Instead, this paper examines why rights claims remain unfulfilled while also documenting the informal solidarities and resistances through which women survive despite institutional abandonment.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs three complementary theoretical perspectives: human rights theory, feminist legal theory, and social contract theory. Rather than treating these as discrete lenses applied sequentially, this paper uses them in dialogue to illuminate different facets of the central puzzle: why do comprehensive legal protections for displaced women fail to translate into practical rights access?

Human rights theory asserts that all individuals have inherent, inalienable rights by virtue of their humanity, regardless of citizenship or social status (Donnelly, 1989). This principle, stemming from Enlightenment thought, particularly Locke's concept of natural rights, places the onus on states to respect, protect, and fulfil these rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) articulates that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1). For internally displaced persons (IDPs), this implies that displacement does not void their entitlements to security, health, education, and participation in governance (Kälin, 2008).

Henry Shue's (1980) notion of "basic rights" underscores that security, subsistence, and liberty are fundamental, as their denial impedes the enjoyment of other rights. For displaced women, lack of physical security and basic necessities undermines their political, social, and economic rights. Without access to maternal healthcare or facing daily hunger, these women struggle to participate in governance or rebuild their livelihoods.

Human rights theory evaluates state performance by establishing a key benchmark. Nigeria's ratification of the Kampala Convention and the National IDP Policy demonstrates its commitment to the rights of displaced women. Unfulfilled rights indicate state accountability (Ignatieff, 2001), yet states may intentionally deny rights to marginalized groups to maintain power (Kennedy, 2002; Mutua, 2002). In Niger State, such denial may be strategic due to elite mining interests. All individuals possess inherent rights by virtue of humanity, regardless of citizenship (Donnelly, 1989). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) asserts that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1), implying

that displaced persons retain rights to security, health, education, and governance participation (Kälin, 2008).

Henry Shue's (1980) concept of "basic rights" emphasizes that security, subsistence, and liberty are essential; their denial hinders the enjoyment of other rights. Displaced women face challenges in physical security and basic needs, affecting their political, social, and economic rights. Lack of access to maternal healthcare and persistent hunger impede their ability to participate in governance or rebuild livelihoods.

Human rights theory acts as a benchmark for evaluating state performance. Nigeria's ratification of the Kampala Convention and the National IDP Policy demonstrates legal commitments to uphold the rights of displaced women. Yet, unfulfilled rights indicate state accountability and violations (Ignatieff, 2001). This analysis goes beyond legalism, as critical scholarship points out that states may strategically deny rights to marginalized groups to maintain power (Kennedy, 2002; Mutua, 2002). This study focuses on Niger State, where displacement may align with elite mining interests.

❖ Feminist Legal Theory: Patriarchy, Power, and Gendered Vulnerability

Feminist legal scholarship critiques traditional human rights frameworks for their gender-blindness, arguing that formal legal equality does not guarantee substantive equality when structural patriarchy persists (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000; MacKinnon, 1989). Laws and policies that appear gender-neutral often perpetuate women's subordination by ignoring how gendered power relations shape access to rights and resources.

In displacement contexts, feminist analysis reveals how women's vulnerabilities are not natural or inevitable but socially constructed through patriarchal norms that restrict women's mobility, economic autonomy, and decision-making power (Freedman, 2016; Hyndman, 2000). Cultural expectations that women remain in domestic roles limit their access to labor markets, while male control over property and resources leaves women economically dependent and vulnerable to exploitation (Parashar, 2014).

Moreover, feminist scholars highlight how displacement governance itself can be patriarchal. Camp management structures often exclude women from leadership and decision-making, prioritizing male perspectives in resource distribution,

security arrangements, and resettlement planning (Sooka, 2018; Meger, 2016). This exclusion violates participatory rights guaranteed under the Kampala Convention (Article 9.2.c) and perpetuates women's marginalization.

The concept of intersectionality, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and extended by Black feminist scholars (Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000), is central to my analysis. Intersectionality demonstrates that women's experiences of displacement are shaped not only by gender but by intersecting identities including class, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, and geographic origin. For displaced women in Niger State, predominantly from rural farming communities with limited formal education, multiple forms of marginalization compound their vulnerability and restrict their ability to claim rights (Cho et al., 2013). This intersectional lens guides my empirical analysis. Rather than treating "displaced women" as a monolithic category, this paper examines variation within this group: How do Christian Gbagyi women in Gwada camp experience rights access differently than Muslim Hausa women in Kuta camp? How does age, marital status, or disability further shape women's vulnerabilities? What role does ethnicity play in host community acceptance?

Feminist theory thus directs attention to both the gendered nature of displacement harms (SGBV, reproductive health risks, care burdens) and the gendered barriers to accessing protection (cultural restrictions, economic dependency, exclusion from governance). It demands that displacement responses move beyond gender-neutral approaches to actively dismantle patriarchal structures that perpetuate women's vulnerability.

❖ **Social Contract Theory: State Obligation and Legitimacy**

Social contract theory, rooted in the work of Hobbes (1651/1996), Locke (1689/2003), and Rousseau (1762/2002), conceptualizes governance as an implicit agreement between citizens and the state. Citizens surrender certain freedoms and accept state authority in exchange for protection, security, and welfare.

Hobbes argued that without effective governance, human life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" due to insecurity and violence (1651/1996, p.89). The primary function of the state, therefore, is providing security, protecting citizens from harm and ensuring conditions for stable, productive life. When the state fails to provide this security, as occurs in displacement crises, it breaches the fundamental social contract (Ferris, 2011).

Locke emphasized that governments derive legitimacy from fulfilling their obligations to citizens, particularly protecting natural rights to life, liberty, and property (1689/2003).

When states violate these obligations, through action or inaction, citizens' trust erodes, and governance loses moral authority. Applied to displacement, this means that when governments fail to prevent displacement, protect displaced populations, or facilitate durable solutions, they violate the reciprocal duties underpinning political legitimacy.

Rousseau's concept of the "general will" adds a participatory dimension, arguing that legitimate governance must reflect the collective good and include citizens in decisions affecting them (1762/2002). For displaced women, exclusion from decision-making in camp management, resettlement planning, or policy design represents a breakdown of this participatory contract. Social contract theory thus frames displacement as evidence of state failure, not merely a humanitarian crisis but a governance crisis. When displaced women cannot access healthcare, education, or justice, it reveals the state's abdication of responsibility to those who should remain under its protection. This theoretical lens highlights the political dimensions of rights denial, positioning displaced women not as passive victims but as citizens whose entitlements the state has failed to honor.

Drawing on critical readings of social contract theory from postcolonial and feminist scholars (Mills, 1997; Pateman, 1988). These critics note that historical social contracts often excluded women, racialized populations, and colonized subjects from full membership, revealing that "universal" citizenship was always stratified. This insight is crucial for understanding Niger State's displacement: perhaps the social contract never fully extended to rural, poor, ethnically marginalized women. Their current abandonment, then, reflects not a broken contract but a contract that never existed for them, a foundational exclusion rather than a recent breach. This darker interpretation aligns with contemporary scholarship on "surplus populations", people rendered expendable by neoliberal capitalism and abandoned by states (Li, 2009; Giroux, 2006). In Niger State's context, displacement creates "surplus" populations whose former lands become profitable mining sites while they themselves become invisible, warehoused in camps without services or prospects. Examining whether this is bureaucratic failure or systemic abandonment is a key analytical task.

❖ **Integrated Framework: Rights, Gender, and Governance**

While each theory offers distinct insights, they converge around a central proposition: Displaced women possess legally and morally grounded rights that states are obligated to fulfill, yet structural inequalities and governance failures systematically prevent rights realisation. Human rights theory establishes what rights displaced women should enjoy (security, health, education, dignity, participation). Feminist legal theory explains why women's rights are specifically undermined through patriarchal structures (restricted mobility, economic dependency, exclusion from decision-making).

Social contract theory clarifies the state's obligation to protect and provide for displaced citizens, framing rights denial as a breach of political legitimacy (or revealing the social contract's exclusionary foundations).

Together, these frameworks guide the empirical analysis by directing attention to: (1) the content and scope of displaced women's rights under law; (2) the gendered barriers preventing access to these rights; (3) the institutional and governance failures that perpetuate rights denial; and (4) the question of whether this represents broken promises or systemic abandonment. They also inform policy recommendations by emphasising that sustainable solutions require not only humanitarian aid but structural reforms addressing power relations, institutional accountability, and participatory governance. Rights are not gifts to be bestowed but entitlements to be claimed, and creating conditions where displaced women can claim rights effectively is the ultimate policy objective.

Methodology

This study adopts a phenomenological research design to examine the lived experiences of internally displaced women in accessing legal rights and protection mechanisms in Niger State, Nigeria. By foregrounding participants' subjective meanings and interpretations, phenomenology enables an in-depth understanding of experiences that are frequently marginalized or insufficiently captured in displacement research. The study is guided by Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach, which emphasizes systematic engagement with participants' narratives and facilitates the emergence of themes inductively from the data, rather than imposing pre-existing analytical categories.

The researcher's positionality as a Nigerian woman, a doctoral candidate in political science, and a resident of Niger State constituted an insider perspective that

facilitated access to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and enhanced rapport with participants. At the same time, differences in educational background, urban upbringing, and economic security introduced potential power asymmetries within the research process. These dynamics were acknowledged and critically managed through deliberate reflexive practices, including the maintenance of a reflexive journal to document emotional responses and assumptions, peer debriefing with academic colleagues, and member validation with selected participants to ensure the credibility and accuracy of interpretations. Participants frequently articulated a sense of reassurance that their experiences were being documented by someone familiar with their socio-cultural context, which they distinguished from encounters with external researchers. Explicit engagement with issues of positionality and power therefore formed a core component of the study's methodological rigor and ethical reflexivity. Purposive sampling technique and data saturation were arrived at after Focused Group discussions were conducted with 20 participants at two camps the two stakeholders in person of a social worker and a journalist were interviewed

The empirical research was conducted in Niger State, with a specific focus on Shiroro and Bosso Local Government Areas, selected due to the two major official IDP camps in the state are situated there, more so the region has experienced escalating insecurity associated with armed banditry and kidnapping, resulting in the displacement of over 21,000 persons. Notably, the drivers of displacement in Niger State differ in important respects from those in northeastern Nigeria, where insurgency has been the dominant factor. In Niger State, displacement is closely linked to banditry associated with illegal gold mining, and kidnapping for ransom. This contextual specificity underscores the need for localised analyses of displacement that move beyond generalised national narratives.

For the ethical approval, Informed consent was obtained verbally after explaining in local languages; Study purpose and researcher affiliation, Voluntary participation with right to withdraw anytime without consequences, Confidentiality protections (pseudonyms, secure data storage), Audio recording procedures, Absence of direct benefits but potential indirect benefits through policy advocacy based on findings, Researcher contact information for questions or concerns Participants verbally agreed before proceeding, with consent audio-recorded. For FGDs, group consent was obtained with each individual also confirming agreement.

Here is the link to find the data collected from the field: IDP field Work Data

Findings

❖ Theme 1: Legal Invisibility; Rights Unknown, Rights Unclaimed

The most striking finding across all participant groups was the near-complete absence of legal awareness among displaced women regarding their rights under national and international frameworks. This legal invisibility operates at multiple levels; women do not know specific rights exist, they do not know rights frameworks like the Kampala Convention exist, and they do not know which institutions are responsible for protecting their rights.

❖ Zero Rights Awareness

When asked directly "Do you know about your rights as internally displaced persons?" participants consistently expressed confusion, uncertainty, or resignation:

"We don't know if we have any rights. We just know that we are displaced people and nobody cares about us." (IDW-K4, Kuta Camp, 55 years).

"What rights? We only know that we need food and safety. If the government cares, they would help us." (IDW-G6, Gwada Camp, 48 years)

"Nobody has come to tell us we have rights or where to complain when things happen to us." (IDW-HC1, Bosso, 62 years)

These responses reveal not merely ignorance of technicalities but a fundamental disconnect between legal frameworks and lived realities. Women framed their situation in terms of needs (food, safety) and charity (hoping government "cares" and "helps") rather than entitlements they can claim. This linguistic framing matters: needs can be met or unmet at state discretion, whereas rights demand fulfillment regardless of benevolence (Ignatieff, 2001).

Stakeholders confirmed this pattern institutionally:

"These IDPs don't know any of their core rights. They have no awareness that they are entitled to healthcare, education, protection under law. To them, everything depends on what government or NGOs choose to give." (Social Worker, 9 years managing IDP affairs)

"The government has never conducted rights education in camps. The IDPs have never been told about the Kampala Convention or the National IDP Policy. They don't know such things exist." (Journalist, 6+ years covering displacement).

The journalist's observation that rights frameworks remain entirely unknown is particularly consequential. Nigeria ratified the Kampala Convention in 2012, thirteen years before this fieldwork. During those thirteen years, no government agency, humanitarian organization, or civil society group systematically educated displaced populations about their legal entitlements. This represents not an oversight but a sustained institutional failure to operationalize rights frameworks beyond policy documents.

❖ **Absence of Rights Education Infrastructure**

Probing further, the research asked whether any organizations had ever provided information about rights. Responses were uniformly negative:

"NGOs come sometimes to give food or soap, but nobody ever talked about rights or laws. They just give things and leave." (IDW-Gz, Gwada, 38 years)

"Even when government people visit, they just take pictures with us and go. They never explain anything." (IDW-K9, Kuta, 52 years)

The social worker elaborated:

"There are no legal literacy programs, no community meetings where rights are explained, no posters or radio programs in local languages. IDPs can't read even if we gave them printed materials about the Kampala Convention. The information infrastructure simply doesn't exist."

This absence is not resource scarcity, printing pamphlets or conducting radio programs is relatively inexpensive. Rather, it reflects political disinterest in empowering displaced populations to claim rights. As critical scholars argue, states may prefer "grateful recipients of charity" over "rights-bearing citizens making demands" because the latter requires accountability mechanisms the former does not (Brown, 1995; Ticktin, 2011).

❖ **Theoretical Interpretation: The Paradox of Rights Without Knowledge**

From a human rights perspective, this legal invisibility constitutes a foundational violation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) asserts that education itself is a right (Article 26), including education about rights. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011) specifies that states must ensure

"everyone knows their rights" (Article 2.2). Nigeria's failure to provide rights education to displaced populations violates these obligations.

More profoundly, rights that remain unknown cannot be exercised. This is not merely philosophical but practical: a woman who doesn't know she's entitled to free maternal healthcare cannot demand it; a woman who doesn't know the Kampala Convention guarantees her participation in camp decisions cannot claim that right. Legal invisibility thus transforms rights frameworks into empty signifiers, symbols of progressive governance that deliver no substantive change (Hesford & Kozol, 2005).

Feminist theory illuminates how this ignorance particularly disadvantages women. Research demonstrates that in patriarchal societies, women have lower literacy rates, less access to information technologies (radio, internet), and more restricted mobility, limiting exposure to public information channels (Nussbaum, 2000). Men, positioned as community spokespersons, may receive information from authorities that never reaches women. This gendered information asymmetry compounds women's marginalization: even if rights education occurred, it might reach men while bypassing women unless explicitly gender-targeted.

Social contract theory reveals this as a fundamental breach. Rousseau (1762/2002) argued that the social contract requires citizens' informed consent and participation, yet how can displaced women consent to or participate in governance when they don't know their entitlements? This suggests the social contract has been unilaterally voided by the state: women are expected to comply with laws (remaining in designated camps, accepting aid distributions) while the state withholds the information enabling them to make claims in return. Alternatively, critical scholars might argue that this reveals that the social contract never extended to these women (Mills, 1997; Pateman, 1988). Rural, poor, uneducated women from peripheral regions may have been outside "the people" whom the state considers deserving of rights, information and protections. Their current invisibility, then, reflects not a broken promise but a foundational exclusion; they were never considered full members of the political community whose rights matter.

Theme 2: Structural Barriers-The Multi-Dimensional Denial of Social Services

Even if displaced women knew their rights, structural barriers systematically prevent access. This theme encompasses three interconnected sub-themes:

healthcare denial and maternal mortality risks; education exclusion and intergenerational poverty; and inadequate shelter and unsafe living conditions.

❖ **Healthcare Denial and Maternal Mortality Risks**

Healthcare emerged as a critical rights violation across all participant groups. While health facilities theoretically exist, they are either non-functional or financially inaccessible, leaving displaced women without basic medical care. Non-functional clinics: In Kuta and Gwada camps, UNICEF-donated structures labeled "clinics" stand empty:

"See our clinic over there" [pointing to abandoned structure]. "It is not manned. There is nobody there, no equipment, no bed, no medications. Even as a pregnant woman, if anything happens to me, my sisters here will just take care of me because we cannot afford to go to the hospital outside." (IDW-K6, Kuta, pregnant, 32 years)

The researcher visited both clinics during fieldwork and confirmed participants' accounts: buildings exist but lack staff, medications, basic equipment (blood pressure monitors, thermometers), or electricity. The Gwada clinic's sign reads "Health Center UNICEF," creating the appearance of health service provision while delivering none, what participants aptly called "an empty promise."

Financial inaccessibility: Displaced women in Bosso host community and those who attempt to access external health facilities face prohibitive costs:

"We go to the hospital but we pay for every service like normal citizens. Even drugs from the chemist are expensive. If we are sick but have no money, we just endure at home." (IDW-HC2, Bosso, 45 years)

"When my child had malaria, I went to the hospital. They asked for ₦15,000 [\$10 USD] for treatment. Where will I get that money? I just went to the chemist and bought tablets for ₦500, hoping it would work. Thank God he recovered." (IDW-G8, Gwada, 41 years)

The healthcare system treats displaced women as "normal citizens" regarding payment but not regarding targeted support. This reflects what Nancy Fraser (2009) terms "formal equality masking substantive inequality", displaced women are formally citizens with equal rights, yet economic marginalisation prevents them from exercising those rights practically. Maternal mortality consequences. The absence of functional maternal healthcare produces deadly outcomes. Stakeholders recounted multiple preventable deaths:

"A woman in Kuta camp gave birth to twins. She died hours later from severe bleeding. The husband had no money to take her to the hospital during labor. By the time people mobilized ₦30,000 for transport and hospital fees, she had bled to death. The babies also died days later because they couldn't be breastfed—no milk formula, the father tried giving them pap but they were too young. Both babies died of malnutrition." (Journalist)

"One woman died of breast cancer in Kuta camp.

She had been battling it for months, no treatment. By the time people raised alarm and we tried to get her to hospital, it was too late. She left three children behind." (Social Worker)

These accounts exemplify basic rights violations in Shue's (1980) framework: without healthcare access, the right to life itself is compromised. Pregnancy and childbirth, biological processes requiring medical support, become life-threatening because institutional healthcare remains inaccessible.

Reproductive health needs are particularly neglected:

"We don't have sanitary materials. We just manage with old cloth. Sometimes we can't even keep ourselves clean during menstruation." (IDW-G5, Gwada, 29 years)

"No family planning services exist here. If you want to avoid pregnancy, you just hope. Some women have had many children since displacement because there's no way to prevent it." (IDW-K7, Kuta, 44 years)

This reproductive health marginalization reflects what feminist scholars identify as systemic neglect of women's reproductive autonomy and health (UNFPA, 2020; Hossain et al., 2021). Humanitarian responses routinely deprioritize reproductive health, treating it as "secondary" to food and shelter, yet for women, reproductive health is foundational to wellbeing, dignity, and life itself (Freedman, 2016).

❖ Education Exclusion and Intergenerational Poverty

Children's education is severely disrupted, with long-term implications for displaced families:

"There is no school here. Our kids do not go to school. They don't have access to formal education. We are just here trying to survive." (IDW-K4, Kuta, 55 years)

"Our children cannot go to school because we need money for school fees, uniforms, books. We don't have that money. So, they stay in the camp or help us with work." (IDW-HC1, Bosso, 62 years)

One participant attempted enrolling children in public school, encountering discrimination:

"I sent my two children to the primary school in town with my small money. But they were harassed every day. The teacher shouted at them for not having uniforms. Other students bullied them, tore their clothes, called them 'dirty displaced children.' The school did nothing to stop it. My children cried daily. I had to withdraw them because I couldn't bear their suffering." (IDW-K8, Kuta, 39 years)

This account reveals how stigma compounds exclusion. Even when displaced parents scrape together resources for education, social discrimination drives children out, transforming educational exclusion from economic into social-cultural barrier.

The long-term consequences are severe:

"Our children are now engaging in trades—boys go to grinding machines to sort grains, girls wash plates in restaurants or help with housework. They are missing education during their most important years. What future will they have?" (IDW-G3, Gwada, 51 years)

"We know education matters, but when you're struggling to eat today, you cannot think about tomorrow. The children must help find food now, even if it costs their schooling." (IDW-K10, Kuta, 47 years)

This reflects a poverty trap dynamic: displacement creates immediate survival pressures that force child labor, which forecloses educational opportunities, perpetuating intergenerational poverty and vulnerability. UNICEF (2022) documents that displacement-induced education disruption has lifelong consequences, particularly for girls who face increased risks of early marriage and exploitation when out of school.

The few educational opportunities that exist are informal and inadequate:

"We only have the Malam [Islamic teacher] who is also displaced. He teaches our children Qur'an and basic Arabic. But he cannot teach mathematics, English, science the things they need for formal certificates." (IDW-K2, Kuta, 58 years)

"In Gwada, we converted one classroom into a worship space. Sometimes the pastor teaches children Bible stories. But this is not real education no curriculum, no certification, nothing that prepares them for life outside the camp." (IDW-G7, Gwada, 50 years).

While religious education provides some structure and literacy skills, it cannot substitute for formal schooling that confers credentials recognized in labor markets.

This educational deficit particularly disadvantages displaced girls, who already face gendered barriers to education and whose families may prioritize boys' schooling when resources are scarce (Nussbaum, 2000).

❖ **Inadequate Shelter and Unsafe Living Conditions**

Housing conditions in camps violate basic dignity and safety standards:

"We sleep in classrooms on wrappers [cloth wraps]. No beds, no mattresses. Just concrete floors. When it rains, water enters and we have nowhere dry to sleep. Mosquitoes bite us all night many children and elderly people get malaria." (IDW-K1, Kuta, 48 years)

"The windows are broken, no doors that lock. Anyone can enter at night. We have had theft cases many times. Women are afraid to sleep because we are vulnerable." (IDW-G6, Gwada, 45 years)

"See the roofs full of holes. When heavy rain comes, it pours inside. Our few belongings get wet and damaged. We just cover ourselves and wait for morning." (IDW-G4, Gwada, 53 years)

These physical conditions create health hazards (mosquito-borne diseases, respiratory infections from damp conditions) and security vulnerabilities (theft, potential assault). The use of public-school classrooms as "shelter" without any adaptation; no partitions for privacy, no lockable doors, no weatherproofing; demonstrates how little thought has been given to dignified housing.

Sanitation facilities are equally inadequate:

"We don't have enough toilets. Many people use one toilet, so it's always dirty and broken. Sometimes we have to go in the bush because the toilets are too disgusting." (IDW-K9, Kuta, 52 years)

"There's no water in the toilets to clean them. The smell is terrible. Women especially suffer during menstruation—no clean, private place to manage ourselves." (IDW-G5, Gwada, 29 years)

Lack of gender-segregated, clean sanitation facilities creates particular vulnerabilities for women and girls, who require privacy and hygiene infrastructure for menstrual management and protection from harassment (UN-HABITAT, 2014).

Host community participants, while slightly better off, described precarious arrangements:

"We live in an uncompleted building. The landlord lets us stay temporarily but could ask us to leave anytime. The building has no windows, no proper roof, just zinc sheets. But at least it's not a classroom shared with many families." (IDW-HC2, Bosso, 45 years)

Theoretical interpretation: These conditions violate socio-economic rights guaranteed under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which Nigeria has ratified. Article 11 guarantees "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living...including adequate food, clothing and housing." Article 12 guarantees "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health." The systematic denial of healthcare, education, and adequate shelter documented here constitutes wholesale violation of these binding obligations.

From a feminist perspective, these denials disproportionately burden women. Maternal mortality from inaccessible healthcare, reproductive health neglect, and unsafe sanitation affecting menstrual management create gender-specific harms. Women also bear primary care responsibilities for sick children and elderly relatives, amplifying their suffering when healthcare is inaccessible. The exclusion of girls from education due to economic pressures perpetuates gendered educational disparities, limiting women's future economic autonomy and political voice (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000).

Social contract theory frames this as governance abandonment. If the state's fundamental responsibility is ensuring citizens' welfare; providing security, health, education; its failure to deliver these to displaced populations represents a profound betrayal. The fact that these populations already suffered state failure to prevent displacement (insecurity allowing banditry) compounds the breach: the state failed

to protect them initially, then failed to care for them after displacement. This double failure hollows out any claim to legitimate governance over these populations.

Theme 3: Institutional Abandonment and Political Marginalization

While policies exist on paper, implementation is negligible or non-existent. This theme encompasses three sub-themes: minimal state presence and aid dependency; exclusion from decision-making and political voice; and absence of justice mechanisms and accountability.

❖ Minimal State Presence and Aid Dependency

Government involvement in camp management and IDP welfare is described as minimal, tokenistic, and politically motivated:

"There was never any intervention from government when we were attacked. We were left to ourselves. Even when we came here, no official help. It was strangers and good Samaritans who brought us vehicles to escape." (IDW-G5, Gwada, 62 years)

"Government brings things occasionally such as bags of rice, maybe blankets but it is only when there's a visit or election period. After the cameras leave, we don't see them for months. The little they bring is not enough and doesn't even reach everyone." (IDW-G6, Gwada, 48 years)

"We have never been called to meetings to discuss our needs or how to help us. Government just decides what to give without asking us what we need. Sometimes what they bring is not useful, like blankets in the hot season, because they never consulted us." (IDW-K5, Kuta, 56 years)

The social worker, a government employee, candidly admitted institutional inadequacy:

"Laws and policies are there, but implementation is highly limited. If I'm honest, out of 100% of IDPs' needs, government provides maybe 10-20%, and even that doesn't reach everyone because of the way distributions are managed. It's mostly NGOs such as Dangote Foundation, Development Initiative for West Africa, Catholic Churches that provide boreholes, toilets, food. Government only acts during festivities or when there's a political visit."

This account confirms what Olanrewaju et al. (2019) documented: Nigeria's IDP governance is characterized by institutional fragmentation, poor coordination, and

abdication of responsibility. Multiple agencies such as National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI), State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), local governments, share mandates without clear coordination, creating accountability vacuums where each disclaims responsibility (Eweka & Olusegun, 2016).

The journalist described political concealment of displacement data:

"The agencies that are supposed to update displacement data hardly do that. Some officials prefer to conceal information because they fear it will affect government plans to attract investors. They don't want Niger State to appear unsafe. But whether you tell investors or not, they will do their own analysis. This concealment serves political interests but leaves displaced populations without accurate data to target interventions."

He also recounted aid diversion and corruption:

"Many times, food donations arrive but officials demand 'their share' before distribution. I know of cases where 100 bags of rice were donated but only 60 reached IDPs while the rest went to officials' homes. IDPs know this happens but cannot complain because they fear officials will retaliate by cutting off even the little they give."

This corruption transforms rights-based assistance into a patronage system where displaced persons become supplicant's dependent on officials' goodwill rather than rights-holders with enforceable entitlements. Amnesty International (2018) documented similar patterns in northeastern Nigeria, where "government officials extorted IDPs, demanding money or sexual favors in exchange for food aid."

Bureaucratic obstruction prevents even well-intentioned interventions:

"I wrote about a woman who urgently needed medical help. I contacted the commissioner, filled forms, explained the situation. By the time approvals came through which was after three weeks, the woman had died. The evil of bureaucracy. People are dying while officials process paperwork." (Journalist)

This bureaucratic dysfunction reflects what Weber (1978) identified as rationalized administration becoming irrational in effect while procedures designed for efficiency instead obstruct urgent action, rendering the state simultaneously present (paperwork, hierarchies exist) and absent (no effective help arrives).

❖ Exclusion from Decision-Making and Political Voice

Displaced women are systematically excluded from decisions affecting their lives:

"Nobody asks us what we need. They just bring things and distribute. Sometimes we need one thing but they bring another. If they would ask us, we would tell them our priorities but they never ask." (IDW-K7, Kuta, 44 years).

"We don't have any organization or committee where we can discuss our situation and present our needs collectively. It's just survival, everyone for themselves." (IDW-G2, Gwada, 38 years)

"When officials visit, they talk to men. They assume men speak for all of us. But men don't always know what women need, especially regarding health, sanitation, childcare. Women's voices are not heard." (IDW-G8, Gwada, 41 years).

The social worker confirmed:

"Nothing like decision-making by IDPs exists. No committees, no representation structures. Officials decide camp rules, aid distribution, everything. IDPs just accept whatever is decided for them. This is partly because IDPs lack education and organization, but also because officials don't create spaces for participation."

This absence of participatory structures violates Article 9.2.c of the Kampala Convention, which obligates states to "take measures to ensure the participation of internally displaced persons, particularly women, in planning and management of their relocation, return or local integration." None of the participants had ever been consulted about camp management, resource allocation, livelihood programs, or return/resettlement plans.

The gendered dimension is stark: even in the rare cases where consultation occurs, men are positioned as community spokespersons while women remain invisible. This reflects patriarchal norms positioning men as public actors and women as domestic (Nussbaum, 2000; Parashar, 2014). Feminist scholars argue that meaningful participation requires not merely "inviting women to male-dominated spaces" but transforming governance structures to value women's knowledge and priorities (Sooka, 2018).

❖ Absence of Justice Mechanisms and Accountability

When rights violations occur such as theft, harassment, exploitation; displaced women have no effective recourse:

"We have nobody to report to. Even when we try to complain, they say we are not their concern. So, we just endure and hope things improve." (IDW-G5, Gwada, 62 years)

"Sometimes our children are bullied in the market when sorting grains people hit them, call them thieves. We complain to market leaders but nothing happens. We are told to 'control your children' even though they are not stealing, just collecting spilled grains." (IDW-K6, Kuta, 40 years)

"When there's theft in the camp, we have no security to report to. The police station is far, and even if we go there, they don't take us seriously. They say we should handle it ourselves." (IDW-K8, Kuta, 39 years)

The journalist described systemic barriers:

"There's no formal channel for IDPs to express grievances or seek redress. The Human Rights Commission office is in Minna [state capital]. For someone in Kuta with ₦2,000 [\$1.40], they would rather buy rice than spend it on transport to Minna to file a complaint that may go nowhere. So, they leave everything to God. that's their justice mechanism."

This absence of accessible justice channels reflects a fundamental failure to operationalize rights guarantees. Nigeria's National IDP Policy includes provisions for complaint mechanisms and oversight, yet none exist in practice. This renders rights entirely symbolic; they exist as text but cannot be claimed, enforced, or remediated when violated (Moyn, 2010).

Theoretical interpretation: These findings demonstrate a profound implementation gap between policy commitments and institutional action. While Nigeria's National IDP Policy mandates state responsibility for IDP welfare and the Kampala Convention creates binding legal obligations, actual state presence ranges from minimal to absent.

From a human rights perspective, this constitutes a state's failure to fulfil obligations. Under international human rights law, states bear primary responsibility for protecting rights. Delegation to NGOs may supplement but cannot replace state duties (Donnelly, 1989). The fact that displaced women survive primarily through NGO charity rather than state services reveals governance abdication.

Feminist critique notes that this institutional neglect is not gender-neutral. Women's specific needs; reproductive health, sanitary materials, protection from SGBV, childcare support, are particularly marginalized when responses prioritize emergency food distribution over comprehensive, sustained programming. Women's exclusion from decision-making ensures their needs remain invisible even when interventions occur.

The absence of justice mechanisms disproportionately affects women, who face gendered forms of exploitation and harassment but cannot seek redress (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000).

Social contract theory interprets this as de facto state withdrawal from the social contract. Displaced women are nominally citizens, they possess legal status, theoretically retain rights, yet functionally they exist outside the polity's protection. They receive neither security (no protection from bandits who displaced them, no camp security) nor welfare (no healthcare, education, or adequate shelter). They cannot participate in governance (no consultation, no representation) or access justice (no complaint mechanisms, no accountability). This creates a condition of "rightlessness" where legal status and substantive citizenship diverge entirely (Arendt, 1951).

As Hannah Arendt argued in analyzing stateless persons, the fundamental right is "the right to have rights" membership in a political community that recognizes one's claims. Displaced women in Niger State possess formal citizenship but lack practical membership in the polity that could enforce their rights. They exist in what Agamben (1998) terms "bare life" biological existence maintained at subsistence level but stripped of political personhood.

Discussion

❖ Legal Invisibility: Strategic Exclusion or Systemic Neglect?

The finding that displaced women possess near-zero awareness of their rights raises a critical analytical question: Is this an oversight or a strategy? One interpretation emphasises capacity deficits and bureaucratic inertia. Niger State government may lack resources, personnel, or technical expertise to conduct rights education campaigns. In this view, legal invisibility reflects unintentional neglect rather than deliberate exclusion, a function of weak state capacity endemic across Nigeria's subnational governments (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

However, several factors challenge this benign interpretation. First, rights education requires minimal resources, radio programs, community meetings, printed materials in local languages are relatively inexpensive. The government manages to conduct voter education campaigns before elections, demonstrating both capacity and political will when motivated. The absence of rights education for IDPs, therefore, reflects political priorities rather than resource scarcity.

Second, as the journalist noted, government officials actively conceal displacement data to avoid deterring investors. This suggests officials are aware of displacement and actively manage information about it, yet choose to hide it from public view rather than inform displaced populations of their rights. This pattern of concealment extends to rights information: educating IDPs about legal entitlements could empower them to make demands, exposing implementation failures and creating accountability pressures officials prefer to avoid. Third, comparative evidence suggests rights education for IDPs is rare even in better-resourced African contexts. Okello (2021) found that in Uganda which is an early Kampala Convention ratifier with stronger state capacity displaced women remained "unaware of legal protections" despite policy commitments. This suggests systemic factors beyond capacity explain the knowledge gap. Drawing on critical scholarship, legal invisibility serves state interests in maintaining displaced populations as subjects of charity rather than rights-holders. Rights claims require responses; institutions must provide healthcare when citizens demand it, investigate when violations are reported, justify decisions when questioned.

Charity, by contrast, operates at state discretion, officials can give or withhold aid based on political calculations, resource availability, or personal preferences without legal obligation (Brown, 1995; Ticktin, 2011). This aligns with what Foucault (1991) termed "governmentality", managing populations through particular rationalities of rule. In displacement contexts, keeping populations ignorant of rights allows governance through pastoral care (benevolent provision) rather than juridical rights (enforceable entitlements). This maintains state power while avoiding accountability: officials can claim credit when aid arrives (demonstrating benevolence) but bear no responsibility when it doesn't (since there's no legal obligation). From a feminist perspective, this strategic ignorance particularly disadvantages women.

Research demonstrates that in patriarchal societies, women have less access to formal information channels, lower literacy, restricted mobility, exclusion from public discussions (Nussbaum, 2000). Even when rights information circulates

informally (through social networks, male-dominated community meetings), it may not reach women.

This gendered information asymmetry compounds women's marginalization: the very populations whose rights are most violated remain least informed about those rights.

❖ **Socio-Economic Rights: Implementation Gaps or Structural Abandonment?**

The systematic denial of healthcare, education, and adequate shelter documented in this study raises questions about why socio-economic rights remain unfulfilled despite legal guarantees. Standard explanations emphasize resource constraints. Nigeria is a developing country; Niger State is relatively poor; providing universal healthcare and education requires fiscal capacity the state lacks. From this perspective, rights denial reflects unfortunate resource scarcity rather than deliberate withholding (Posner, 2014). However, this explanation is insufficient for several reasons. First, as the journalist noted, Niger State budgeted ₦33.7 billion (\$23 million) in 2025 for erosion control, demonstrating substantial fiscal capacity. Yet IDP camps receive negligible funding. This suggests socio-economic rights denial reflects allocation priorities rather than absolute scarcity, the state chooses not to fund IDP services, not that it cannot afford them. Second, even minimal interventions such as staffing existing clinic structures, providing basic medications, exempting IDP children from school fees; would dramatically improve services yet remain unimplemented. This suggests the barrier is not primarily financial but political will. Third, the reliance on NGOs for basic services (water, toilets, occasional food) demonstrates that external actors with far less resources than the state manage to provide more. This further undermines resource scarcity. Alternatively, socio-economic rights denial reflects political-economic dynamics where displacement serves elite interests. As the social worker and journalist alleged, armed groups seizing land for illegal mining are sometimes sponsored by wealthy individuals. Displacement creates "surplus populations" (Li, 2009) and these are people rendered expendable whose former lands become profitable extraction sites.

From a critical perspective, the confinement of displaced populations in camps, devoid of adequate services or prospects for return, fulfills several significant functions. Firstly, it facilitates ongoing land seizure, as individuals who cannot return due to insecurity or destruction of their homes leave their properties

available for exploitation, including mining activities. Secondly, this practice diminishes political pressure by dispersing displaced individuals across various camps and host communities, thus obstructing their ability to organise and advocate for accountability.

Moreover, this approach reduces state expenditures by limiting the services provided to displaced populations, with governments often depending on NGOs to meet humanitarian needs. Finally, upholding this status quo obscures elite complicity, as a comprehensive resolution to displacement could reveal those who benefit from land seizures and challenge the interests of powerful factions. This interpretation aligns with critical scholarship on accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004): capitalist expansion often requires displacing populations from resource-rich lands, then abandoning them as surplus labor. In Niger State's context, displacement enables illegal mining while the displaced themselves become invisible, expendable populations.

From a feminist perspective, this abandonment disproportionately harms women. Maternal mortality from inaccessible healthcare, reproductive health neglect, and children's education disruption create gendered suffering. Yet because women's reproductive and care labor is economically invisible (unpaid domestic work doesn't appear in GDP), their suffering also becomes politically invisible; policymakers don't count maternal deaths as economic losses requiring intervention (Fraser, 2009).

❖ **Institutional Abandonment: Governance Failure or State Transformation?**

The minimal state presence and institutional dysfunction documented raise questions about what kind of state failure this represents. Conventional governance literature interprets such patterns as institutional weakness, bureaucracies lack capacity, coordination, or accountability mechanisms to deliver services effectively (Fukuyama, 2014). From this perspective, Niger State exhibits characteristics of "fragile states" where institutions exist formally but function poorly, creating gaps between policy and implementation (Olanrewaju et al., 2019). However, Akhil Gupta's (2012) concept of "structural violence" offers a more critical interpretation.

Gupta argues that governance failures producing mass suffering (hunger, preventable deaths, rights denial) are not merely technical deficits but structural violence which creates systemic patterns of harm embedded in political-economic arrangements.

From this view, Niger State's institutional dysfunction is not accidental but reflects how power operates: some populations (urban elites, politically connected) receive services while others (rural poor, displaced) are systematically excluded.

This reframes displacement governance from "failure" to "selective abandonment" whereby the state functions effectively for some populations while abandoning others. Evidence supports this: state institutions manage to conduct elections, collect taxes in urban areas, and provide services to politically connected constituencies. The same government that cannot staff an IDP clinic manages to hold elaborate political events in the state capital. This suggests capacity exists but is selectively deployed. Ferguson's (1990) concept of the "anti-politics machine" is also relevant. Ferguson argued that development interventions often fail to achieve stated goals (poverty reduction) while successfully achieving unstated functions (expanding bureaucratic power, depoliticising issues). Applied here, IDP policies and donor-funded programs may fail to protect displaced women's rights while successfully accomplishing other objectives. Foremost, the legitimisation of state power is often reflected in policies that signal the government's concern for its citizens, even when these policies are not effectively implemented. Additionally, access to donor funds for international displacement aid tends to direct financial resources towards government agencies, thereby creating opportunities for patronage. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding displacement frequently frames it as a humanitarian crisis, which serves to depoliticise the issue, diverting attention from the underlying political and economic factors that necessitate accountability.

Social contract theory provides another interpretation that perhaps this represents not a broken contract but contract transformation. Historically, social contracts presupposed territorially bounded polities where citizens and state shared interests in mutual flourishing. But in globalised, neoliberal contexts, states increasingly manage populations through triage, which is the investing in productive populations (urban workers, skilled labor) while abandoning unproductive surplus (rural displaced) (Mbembe, 2003). From this perspective, displaced women exist outside the social contract because they are economically superfluous, neither taxpayers contributing revenue nor consumers driving markets. Their abandonment reflects not governance failure but a new logic of governance where state responsibility extends only to economically viable populations.

Conclusion

This study examined how internally displaced women in Niger State, Nigeria access their legal rights and protection mechanisms, revealing a profound gap between normative commitments and lived realities. Three major findings emerged; First, displaced women possess near-zero awareness of their rights under national and international frameworks. Despite Nigeria's ratification of the Kampala Convention and adoption of a National IDP Policy, no rights education reaches displaced populations. Consequently, women cannot articulate claims, demand accountability, or navigate justice systems. This legal invisibility is not accidental but reflects political disinterest in empowering displaced populations to make demands requiring state accountability.

Second, displaced women face systematic exclusion from basic services healthcare, education, adequate shelter despite constitutional guarantees. Healthcare facilities exist but remain non-functional; education is unaffordable; housing is undignified and unsafe. These deprivations constitute violations of socio-economic rights under international human rights law. Importantly, these denials reflect political priorities and resource allocation decisions rather than absolute scarcity, as evidenced by substantial state budgets for other sectors while IDP services receive negligible funding.

Third, profound implementation gaps exist between federal policy frameworks and state-level action. While policies articulate comprehensive protections, institutional responses remain minimal, tokenistic, or entirely absent. Displaced women are excluded from decision-making processes, have no complaint mechanisms when rights are violated, and survive primarily through NGO charity rather than state services.

This creates a condition of "rightlessness" whereby there is formal citizenship without substantive membership in the political community that could enforce rights.

In other words, Niger State, comprehensive legal frameworks exist to protect displaced women's rights, yet these protections remain entirely disconnected from lived experience. Displaced women survive through resilience, faith, and mutual support, not because of institutional protection but despite institutional neglect or abandonment.

This gap between law and reality constitutes not merely a humanitarian failure but a profound crisis of governance, legitimacy, and citizenship. When the state cannot or will not protect its most vulnerable members, it forfeits moral authority and perpetuates cycles of vulnerability, exploitation, and marginalization. The question this study raises is whether this represents broken promises that can be repaired through better implementation, or systemic abandonment reflecting deeper transformations in how states relate to surplus populations in neoliberal global capitalism.

Yet within the despair documented, displaced women's voices also reveal remarkable agency: women who form mutual support networks when institutions fail; who pursue informal livelihoods when formal opportunities are denied; who maintain dignity despite stigma; and who articulate clear visions of what justice requires, not charity, but restoration of rights, security, and the ability to return home. As one woman powerfully stated:

"We want to farm. We want to make our own food. We don't want to be dependent... But we need farmland. We need our homes back. We need to be treated as human beings, not just displaced people waiting for help." (IDW-G8)

This assertion of dignity, autonomy, and rights claims, not pity, points toward what transformative governance must entail. Honouring these voices requires moving beyond emergency relief toward structural transformation: gender-responsive governance, enforceable rights protections, participatory decision-making, and accountability for those who perpetuate displacement or exploit the displaced. Only through such transformation can Nigeria fulfill its obligations under international law and restore the broken social contract with internally displaced women. The alternative, continued abandonment masked by occasional charity, is not only legally indefensible and morally unconscionable but ultimately politically unsustainable. Populations excluded from the social contract's protections may eventually reject its obligations, creating instability far exceeding the costs of fulfilling rights commitments. Justice delayed is justice denied and for Nigeria's internally displaced women, justice has been denied far too long.

These findings demonstrate that displaced women in Niger State exist in a state of structural abandonment. possessing legal entitlements that remain systematically unenforceable due to institutional weakness, patriarchal governance, and possible political-economic interests served by maintaining displacement. Unlike northeastern Nigeria where insurgency drives displacement, Niger State's crisis

stems from armed banditry linked to illegal mining, creating distinct dynamics where displacement may enable resource extraction while displaced populations become expendable.

Recommendations

Based on findings and grounded in evidence from comparative contexts, the study proposes seven actionable recommendations organised by urgency and feasibility:

❖ Rights Education Campaign

Federal and state governments, in collaboration with NGOs, should launch comprehensive legal literacy programs in all IDP camps and displacement-affected communities.

Educate displaced persons about rights under the Nigerian Constitution, National IDP Policy, and Kampala Convention, plus practical information on accessing services and complaint mechanisms.

Radio programs in local languages (Hausa, Gbagyi, Nupe), community meetings facilitated by trained educators, visual materials for low-literacy populations, women-only sessions where culturally appropriate.

All stakeholders should have a clearcut responsibilities and is explicitly spelt so that there wouldnt be overlapping of functions; NCFRMI (federal level), NSEMA (state level), UNHCR, UNICEF, civil society organizations.

A specific budget allocation should be set aside for the Niger State pilot project, covering expenses for materials, training, and radio airtime. This budget should be monitored closely for effective implementation.

❖ Functional Health Services

Staff existing clinic structures in Kuta and Gwada camps with minimum one nurse, one midwife, and essential medications. Provide weekly mobile clinic visits to host communities. Maternal/reproductive health, malaria treatment, first aid, referral mechanisms for emergencies which should be taken of by the Niger State Ministry of Health, UNICEF (which donated infrastructure), WHO.

❖ Education Fee Exemptions and Anti-Discrimination

State government should exempt all IDP children from school fees, uniform requirements, and examination charges in public schools. Implement anti-

discrimination training for teachers and zero-tolerance policies for bullying of displaced children. The Government should have a monitoring system where by there would be established anonymous reporting channels for discrimination, with consequences for schools failing to protect IDP children. This should be handled by the Niger State Universal Basic Education Board and school administrators.

❖ **Complaint Mechanisms and Legal Aid**

Establish IDP Ombudsperson office with authority to investigate complaints, compel institutional responses, and facilitate access to justice. Create mobile legal aid clinics providing free representation quarterly in displacement-affected areas. which handles complaints about rights violations, service denial, discrimination, SGBV, land/property disputes. Niger State Attorney General's Office, Nigerian Bar Association, civil society legal aid organisations should be responsible for.

❖ **Gender-Responsive Livelihood Programs**

Design and implement women-targeted livelihood programs recognising gendered economic roles: farming cooperatives providing land access, skills training (tailoring, food processing), microcredit schemes with women-friendly terms (no male co-signers required). Decision should be Participatory, consult displaced women about preferred livelihoods, barriers faced, support needed. Provide childcare during training to enable women's participation. The Responsible actors should be NSEMA, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, World Bank (which funds livelihood programs), women's NGOs.

❖ **Participatory Governance Structures**

Establish IDP committees in each camp with a minimum 50% women's representation, decision-making power over camp management, resource distribution, and input into state-level policy. Provide capacity-building for women leaders. Ensure regular consultations before any policy decisions affecting displaced populations. this ensures that Kampala Convention Article 9.2.c requirement for IDP participation, particularly women is implemented. With the NSEMA, camp administrators, women's rights organizations as the coordinating actors for this.

❖ **Legislative Backing and Accountability Reform**

Niger State House of Assembly should pass legislation domesticating the National IDP Policy and Kampala Convention, creating enforceable obligations with penalties for non-compliance. Establish independent monitoring commission with civil

society representation conducting quarterly audits of IDP service. Mandatory budget allocation for IDP services (minimum 2% of state budget), quarterly reporting requirements, penalties for aid diversion/corruption, complaint mechanisms with transparent investigation procedures. Niger State House of Assembly and the, Governor's Office, should be responsible while civil organisations play oversight. However, it is essential to consider the political feasibility of such reforms, which involves sustained advocacy that clearly articulates the political costs of inaction alongside the benefits of implementing change.

❖ **Address Root Causes: Security and Accountability**

Federal and state governments must address displacement drivers through enhanced security, prosecution of elites sponsoring armed groups, regulation of illegal mining, community-based peacebuilding. As participants emphasized, "there is no place like home." Durable solutions require enabling safe, voluntary return through security restoration and livelihood rehabilitation, not perpetual camp residence. The actors that should be responsible includes Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services, military, judiciary, Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development.

These recommendations are sequenced by urgency and feasibility, recognizing that immediate interventions (rights education, functional health services) can begin quickly while structural reforms (legislation, security) require longer-term political mobilization. Cost estimates demonstrate affordability, total annual costs (approximately \$500,000) represent less than 0.5% of Niger State's 2025 budget, underscoring that barriers are political will rather than fiscal capacity.

References

- Adeola, R. (2021). The Kampala Convention and the protection of persons internally displaced by harmful practices in Africa. *Journal of African Law*, 65(Supplement S1), 101-114. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855321000073>
- African Union. (2009). African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). African Union. <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa>
- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press.
- Amnesty International. (2018). They betrayed us: Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/8415/2018/en/>
- Amnesty International. (2020). Nigeria: Internally displaced women and girls at risk of sexual violence. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/nigeria-idp-women-sexual-violence/>
- Arendt, H. (1951). *The origins of totalitarianism*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Bawa, A. B., & Mohammed, S. U. (2024). Deconstructing the culture of silence: Sexual and gender-based violence in IDPs' camps of North East Nigeria. *Tropical Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 6(2), 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.47524/tjah.v6i2.65>
- Brown, W. (1995). *States of injury: Power and freedom in late modernity*. Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, J. (2021). Nigeria and the nation-state: Rethinking diplomacy with the postcolonial world. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cantor, D. J. (2018). The IDP in international law? Developments, debates, prospects. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 30(3), 191-216. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeey035>
- Charlesworth, H., & Chinkin, C. (2000). *The boundaries of international law: A feminist analysis*. Manchester University Press.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785-810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- Cohen, R., & Deng, F. M. (1998). *Masses in flight: The global crisis of internal displacement*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48-71). Oxford University Press.
- Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Unwin Hyman.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Donnelly, J. (1989). *Universal human rights in theory and practice*. Cornell University Press.
- Eweka, O., & Olusegun, T. (2016). Management of internally displaced persons in Africa: Comparing Nigeria and Cameroon. *African Research Review*, 10(1), 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v10i1.15>
- Fassin, D. (2012). *Humanitarian reason: A moral history of the present*. University of California Press.

- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2021). National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (Revised Edition). Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development.
- Ferguson, J. (1990). The anti-politics machine: "Development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho. Cambridge University Press.
- Ferris, E. (2011). Protracted displacement: Uncertain futures. In E. Ferris & K. Weerasinghe (Eds.), Resolving displacement: Dynamics of durable solutions (pp. 15-34). Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Ferris, E. (2014). The politics of protection: The limits of humanitarian action. Brookings Institution Press.
- Ferris, E. (2018). Internal displacement in West Africa: Challenges and opportunities. *Forced Migration Review*, 58, 45-48.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 87-104). University of Chicago Press.
- Fraser, N. (2009). Scales of justice: Reimagining political space in a globalizing world. Columbia University Press.
- Freedman, J. (2016). Gendering the international asylum and refugee debate (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fukuyama, F. (2014). Political order and political decay: From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Gebre, Y. (2022). Implementing the Kampala Convention in Ethiopia: Progress and challenges. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 35(1), 88-107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab089>
- Giroux, H. A. (2006). Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, class, and the biopolitics of disposability. *College Literature*, 33(3), 171-196. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2006.0037>
- Goodale, M. (2007). The practice of human rights: Tracking law between the global and the local. Cambridge University Press.
- Gupta, A. (2012). Red tape: Bureaucracy, structural violence, and poverty in India. Duke University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The 'new' imperialism: Accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40, 63-87.
- Hesford, W., & Kozol, W. (2005). Just advocacy? Women's human rights, transnational feminisms, and the politics of representation. Rutgers University Press.
- Hobbes, T. (1996). *Leviathan* (R. Tuck, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1651)
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (2nd ed.). South End Press.
- Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Kiss, L., Kone, D., Bakayoko-Topolska, M., Manan, D. K. A., Lehmann, H., & Watts, C. (2021). Working with men to prevent intimate partner violence in a conflict-affected setting: A pilot cluster randomized controlled trial in rural Côte d'Ivoire. *BMC Public Health*, 14, Article 339. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-339>
- Human Rights Watch. (2016). Nigeria: Officials abusing displaced women, girls. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/31/nigeria-officials-abusing-displaced-women-girls>
- Hyndman, J. (2000). Managing displacement: Refugees and the politics of humanitarianism. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hyndman, J., & Giles, W. (2017). Refugees in extended exile: Living on the edge. Routledge.
- IDMC (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre). (2024). Global report on internal displacement. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024/>
- Ignatieff, M. (2001). Human rights as politics and idolatry. Princeton University Press.

IOM (International Organization for Migration). (2023). Displacement tracking matrix: Nigeria report. <https://dtm.iom.int/nigeria>

Jansen, S., & Löfving, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Struggles for home: Violence, hope and the movement of people*. Berghahn Books.

Kälin, W. (2008). Guiding principles on internal displacement: Annotations. American Society of International Law.

Kälin, W. (2020). The Kampala Convention at ten: Progress and persistent challenges. *Forced Migration Review*, 65, 8-10.

Kamar, H., Yusuf, H. E., Akote, A. Y., & Abubakar, B. B. (2022). Resilience against banditry and insurgency in Niger State, Nigeria (2015 to 2022). *Journal of Terrorism Studies*, 4(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jts.v4i2.1050>

Kennedy, D. (2002). The international human rights movement: Part of the problem? *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 15, 101-126.

Li, T. M. (2009). To make live or let die? Rural dispossession and the protection of surplus populations. *Antipode*, 41(S1), 66-93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00717.x>

Locke, J. (2003). *Two treatises of government* (P. Laslett, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1689)

Lokot, M., Hartman, E., & Hashmi, I. (2023). Participatory approaches and methods in gender equality and gender-based violence research with refugees and internally displaced populations: A scoping review. *Conflict and Health*, 17, Article 58. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00554-0>

MacKinnon, C. A. (1989). *Toward a feminist theory of the state*. Harvard University Press.

Matfess, H. (2017). *Women and the war on Boko Haram: Wives, weapons, witnesses*. Zed Books.

Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11-40. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>

Meger, S. (2016). The fetishization of sexual violence in international security. *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(1), 149-159. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw003>

Merry, S. E. (2006). *Human rights and gender violence: Translating international law into local justice*. University of Chicago Press.

Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Cornell University Press.

Mooney, E. (2005). The concept of internal displacement and the case for internally displaced persons as a category of concern. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 24(3), 9-26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdio49>

Moyn, S. (2010). *The last utopia: Human rights in history*. Harvard University Press.

Mukwege, D., & Nangini, C. (2019). Sexual violence in conflict zones: A case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(4), 789-812. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718788285>

Mutua, M. (2002). *Human rights: A political and cultural critique*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

NSEMA (Niger State Emergency Management Agency). (2022). *IDP mapping report: Spatial distribution and demographics*. Niger State Government.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Nwaorgu, O., & Orsaa, S. (2023). Coordination challenges in Nigeria's IDP management system. *African Governance Review*, 12(1), 45-62.

- Okello, M. C. (2021). Uganda's implementation of the Kampala Convention: Achievements and challenges. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 21(1), 45-72. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2021/v21n1a2>
- Okello, M. C., & Ouma, L. (2021). Gender mainstreaming in IDP protection: The Ugandan experience. *East African Journal of Peace & Human Rights*, 27(1), 12-35.
- Olanrewaju, F. O., Olanrewaju, A., Omotoso, F., Alabi, J. O., Amoo, E., Loromeke, E., & Ajayi, L. A. (2019). Insurgency and the invisible displaced population in Nigeria: A situational analysis. *SAGE Open*, 9(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019846207>
- Onisanakin, F., Akande, Y., & Hassan, T. (2020). Displacement and vulnerability: The gendered face of internal migration in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 29(3), 263-281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1783743>
- Orchard, P. (2014). *A right to flee: Refugees, states, and the construction of international cooperation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Osasona, T. (2022). The question of definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria's North-West in the context of international humanitarian law. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 105(923), 735-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383122000455>
- Oucho, J. O. (2020). *Undercurrents of ethnic conflicts in Kenya*. Brill.
- Parashar, S. (2014). *Women and militant wars: The politics of injury*. Routledge.
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The sexual contract*. Stanford University Press.
- Posner, E. A. (2014). *The twilight of human rights law*. Oxford University Press.
- Rousseau, J. J. (2002). *The social contract and the first and second discourses* (S. Dunn, Ed.). Yale University Press. (Original work published 1762)
- Shue, H. (1980). *Basic rights: Subsistence, affluence, and U.S. foreign policy*. Princeton University Press.
- Sooka, Y. (2018). Gender justice and accountability in conflict. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 12(2), 253-261. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijy008>
- Tadesse, G., Andualem, F., Rtbe, G., Belete, A., Muluneh, M. D., & Arage, G. (2024). Gender-based violence and its determinants among refugees and internally displaced women in Africa: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health*, 24, Article 2851. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-20329-8>
- Temple, B., & Young, A. (2004). Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research*, 4(2), 161-178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104044430>
- Ticktin, M. (2011). *Casualties of care: Immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France*. University of California Press.
- UN (United Nations). (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- UN Women. (2023). *Gender-responsive humanitarian action: A framework for protection and empowerment*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/01/gender-responsive-humanitarian-action>
- UN-HABITAT. (2014). *The right to adequate housing* (Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- UN-IDP-Atlas. (2024). *Nigeria IDP dashboard*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <https://www.unocha.org/nigeria>
- UNFPA. (2020). *Reproductive health in humanitarian settings: An inter-agency field manual*. United Nations Population Fund.

UNHCR. (2021). Nigeria factsheet: Internally displaced persons. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/nigeria>

UNICEF. (2022). Girls' education and gender equality: Key statistics in displacement settings. United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). (1998). Guiding principles on internal displacement. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ceicff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

Weber, M. (1978). Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press. (Original work published 1922)

Wirtz, A. L., Pham, K., Glass, N., Loochkartt, S., Kidane, T., Cuspoca, D., Rubenstein, L. S., Singh, S., & Vu, A. (2014). Gender-based violence in conflict and displacement: Qualitative findings from displaced women in Colombia. *Conflict and Health*, 8, Article 10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-8-10>

Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	8-Apr-2026
<i>Revised</i>	11-May-2026
<i>Accepted</i>	10-Jun-2026
<i>Published</i>	30-Jun-2026

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All Authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

▪ **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

▪ **Funding Sources:** NIL

Correspondence:

Aisha Dangana

ibrahimsalihukombo@gmail.com
