



## Meeting The Humanitarian Challenges Of Internally Displaced Persons: Case Study Of Selected African Countries

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The world's most pervasive violence in recent times was suffered in Africa as nearly 26 million people became internally displaced by conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations<sup>1</sup>. Currently, there are about 28 million Internally Displaced Persons around the world as a result of years of war, repression, insurgency, herdsman/farmers clash, civil unrest, and politically induced humanitarian emergencies.<sup>2</sup> The forced relocation of people within their own countries for brief or long periods as a result of armed conflicts, civil strife and the systematic violations of human rights, has become a frequent occurrence in Africa. Often, huge populations are displaced within their own country through the unlawful acts of State and non State actors dispossessed of the means to a peaceful, stable and normal existence.<sup>3</sup> The number of Internally Displaced Persons has grown astronomically in recent years. From a population of 1.2 million in 11 countries when they were first counted in 1982, they had increased to more than 20 million in 1995 in at least 35 countries<sup>4</sup> and about 26 million at the end of 2008<sup>5</sup>. Current statistics indicate that there have been more than 15 million IDPs in 18 sub-Saharan countries in 2017 with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan and Somalia having the largest no of displaced people in Africa and among the largest in the world.<sup>6</sup> By far the largest single cause of displacement today remains war with the added horrors of terrorism and insurgency resulting in thousands fleeing to more peaceful communities in genuine fear for their personal safety.<sup>7</sup> As rightly observed, being forced into flight totally disrupts the lives of the internally displaced who remain trapped in the same unsafe environment from which they tried to flee.<sup>8</sup> Displacement generally implies a disruption of social services and social relations. It results in a loss or destruction of livelihoods, together with a broader erosion of a person's social identity.

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2. [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) assessed on the 9/05/2017; See Erin D. Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the case for IDPs as a Category of Concern," in *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24, no. 3, 2015: 9. Print .The issue is on "Internally Displaced Persons: The Challenges of International Protection."
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7. White, S. (ed.) *Internally Displaced People, A Global Survey* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed London: Earth scan Pub. Ltd., 2002 :33. Print.; Mooney, Erin. "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern." *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, volume 24, Issue 3, 2005 : 9-26. Print ; Mooney, Erin "Towards a Protection Regime for Internally Displaced Persons," in *Refugees and Forced Displacement: International Security, Human Vulnerability and the State*, ed Edward, Newman and Joanne van Selm, Tokyo: UN University Press, 2003 : Print.
8. *ibid*.



People who lose their homes do not only grieve for the loss of material objectives and separation from relations and friends, but also suffer partial loss of identity that is embedded in land, nature, social relations and actions. IDPs also contend with problems while seeking a voluntary and safe return or resettlement elsewhere.

They also encounter multitudes of problems when contemplating return to their places of primary abode amongst other problems arising from displacement resulting from violent conflicts. In the light of the foregoing, in a continent plagued by deadly and seemingly endless conflicts, the needs of the internally displaced are both urgent and immense. The purpose of this paper therefore is twofold: (a) to examine the causes of displacement in selected African countries as representative of the African reality on displacement, (in) capacity to manage the phenomenon and the humanitarian challenges confronting the continent and (b) to determine government response to these causes. This analysis is therefore based upon a review of these countries and an examination of the problems encountered by the internally displaced. The paper will also analyze the humanitarian response available to them. In doing this, the paper will determine the existence or otherwise of legal frameworks, policies or instruments put in place by the States under review in protecting this category of persons.

### **CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT**

The phenomenon of internal displacement has been widely described as one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time.<sup>9</sup> Since the end of the cold war, conflicts between different communities, ethnic nationalities, religious and socio-economic groups have multiplied at an alarming rate. The end of the cold war is a significant milestone in the period of conflicts in Africa. This is because the end of the cold war marked the beginning of the dominance of western democratic paradigm, its definitions of democracy, democratic institutions and the global acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and socio-economic and cultural rights as the minimum standards to be employed in evaluating human dignity and well-being. It has been opined that hundreds of thousands of people in the face of violent inter-communal conflict or civil war are forced from the safety of their homes and compelled to take flight. Some of these people congregate in camps where they hope to find safety, food, medical aid and shelter, while some hide in forests, jungles and other inhospitable terrain, too fearful to seek assistance of any kind.<sup>10</sup> Concurring with this assertion, Cohen (1998), observed and rightly so too, that the forced displacement of people within their countries by reasons of armed conflicts and other forms of human rights violations has become too frequent in this century. Such displacement it is opined, is capable of undermining nation-building efforts as groups and cultural identities fail to employ non-violent options in resolving conflicts.

### **Case Studies of selected Countries**

The countries being examined were under colonial rule between the late nineteenth century and late twentieth century, most of which gained independence in the 1960s. Another common feature of the selected countries is the total absence of or weak democratic systems and State institutions. This naturally affects their capacity for humanitarian empathy and response. We shall now commence the discussion of selected African countries on the causes of displacement, the government response, and the availability or otherwise of policies for the protection of the displaced.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

The situation in DRC is considered one of the world's largest and most complex humanitarian crises. The crises was as severe as those in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, which was the result of an armed power struggle between various groups – both external and internal – accompanied by inter-ethnic rivalry in the central and eastern regions.<sup>11</sup> The conflict had been simmering since the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Sixties of the last century.

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<sup>9</sup> Cohen, Roberta. and Deng, Francis, *Masses in Flight: The global crisis of Internal Displacement* Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1998:10. Print.; Wali, S., "Human Rights for Refugee and Displaced Women", in Peter, J.S. and Wolper A. eds, *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, New York: Routledge Publishers, 1995: 335. Print.

<sup>10</sup> Frelick, B., "Aliens in Their Own Land: Protection and Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, Washington, D.C.: USCR, 1998: 30. Print.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Security Council, April 2001



The contemporary phase of the violent conflict began in 1996 when a rebel army, supported by Rwandan and Ugandan troops, launched an attack on the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko which resulted in the fall of Mobutu and the coming to power of Laurent Kabila.<sup>12</sup> By mid 1997, about 150,000 people were estimated to be displaced in the country.<sup>13</sup> In 1998, a major rebellion against the new regime, supported by Kabila's former allies, Rwanda and Uganda, started in the east and developed into a new civil war.<sup>14</sup> Continued hostilities between Kabila's forces, armed contingents from several African nations and three rebel factions resulted in large-scale massacres and massive displacement.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, clashes between the rebels and armed groups such as the Mai Mai traditional warriors also forced people to flee their homes,<sup>16</sup> while competition for the DRC's rich natural resources, including diamonds, gold and precious metals such as coltan sustained the war. Under the auspices of the government of Zambia, Kabila's government, with allies, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, signed a ceasefire with Rwanda and Uganda in 1999 in Lusaka, Zambia.<sup>17</sup> However, the ceasefire was not respected and fighting continued resulting in the displacement of 3.4 million people between 1999-2003.<sup>18</sup> In January 2001, the assassination of Kabila and the rise to power of his son, Joseph Kabila, led to a new momentum in the peace process. The recently released displacement figures brings the total number of IDPs to 3.9 million.<sup>19</sup> Over 922,000 people were forced to flee their homes in 2016, while over 1 million are newly displaced since the start of 2017.<sup>20</sup> This was the highest number of internal displacement due to conflict recorded globally. The human rights situation was critical in the DRC.<sup>21</sup> There were reports of widespread killings, torture and other human rights abuses against civilians by armed groups.<sup>22</sup> Internally displaced women were preyed upon by armed elements and subjected to torture, sexual assault and other abuses as well as ethnically motivated killings.<sup>23</sup> Recent succession struggles between Kabila supporters and other claimants to state power has accentuated the conditions of IDPs and disrupted the settled normal life of its citizens.

## Nigeria

Internal displacement in Nigeria was already in the headlines over 50 years ago when some two million people died and several millions became internally displaced during the Biafran war (1967 – 1970).<sup>24</sup> While displacement of this magnitude has not reappeared since then, Nigeria has over decades seen a dramatic increase in communal violence. Although the situation cannot be compared to that of the civil war or be characterized as a typical "armed conflict", all parts of the country have recently been affected by armed clashes between different ethnic groups or between political factions. Added together, these pockets of violence have caused a humanitarian situation and levels of internal displacement comparable to some of the better known African emergencies.<sup>25</sup> Displacement in Nigeria sometimes lasts for just a few days, but in recent years people have often been internally displaced for several months or years. The causes of communal violence in Nigeria have old historical roots but military regimes kept the underlying tensions in check. With the re-introduction of Democracy in 1999, new opportunities opened up for people to express their grievances and new areas of conflict were created by the competition for political spoils.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Security Council, November 2001

<sup>13</sup> UNOCHA, September 2001

<sup>14</sup> UNOCHA, February 2002

<sup>15</sup> ibid

<sup>16</sup> ibid

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Security Council, 27<sup>th</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the U.N. organization mission in the DRC, UN Document/2009/160.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Security Council, 27<sup>th</sup> report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization mission in the DRC, UN Doc S/2009/160, 27 March 2009.

<sup>19</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo\\_assessed\\_3/09/2018](https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo_assessed_3/09/2018)

<sup>20</sup> ibid

<sup>21</sup> United Nations office for the co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Action Plan: Democratic Republic of Congo, 2009, p.30, available at [http://www.rdc-humanitaire.net/IMG/pdf/2009\\_DRC\\_HAP\\_EN\\_FINAL\\_-2.pdf](http://www.rdc-humanitaire.net/IMG/pdf/2009_DRC_HAP_EN_FINAL_-2.pdf) assessed September 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Haver k., Out of Site: Building better Responses to Displacement in the DRC by Helping host Families, Oxfam International Research Report, September 2008, p.10 available at [http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc\\_0908.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc_0908.pdf) assessed September 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>23</sup> See HIV in Humanitarian Situations, Democratic Republic of Congo: HIV Humanitarian Overview, available at <http://www.aidsandemergencies.org/cms/index.php>

<sup>24</sup> Emma, Ujay. "Nigerian Refugees." *Vanguard* October 17, 2001: 5. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Best, Shedrack. *Protracted Communal Conflict and Conflict Management: The Bassa-Egbura conflicts in Toto local Government Area, Nassarawa State, Nigeria*, Ibadan: John Archers 2004 :67. Print.



This has been reflected by the rise in communal violence which simplified, can be summarized into five categories: ethnic rivalry; religious violence; land conflicts; conflicts related to the demarcations of administrative boundaries and political elections; and conflicts linked to oil production in the Niger Delta. While some of these conflicts may appear at the outset to be caused by a single factor e.g. religion or ethnicity, the reality is most often that a mixture of other issues together culminates in violence. The introduction of Sharia in the Northern States have caused tensions but when Moslem and Christian groups clash, this may have been triggered by other factors than lack of religious tolerance, such as pressure on land, unequal access to social services and so on. However, the polarization that materializes most often follow religious lines and observers tend to immediately characterize the conflict as a “religious war”. The same dynamics is often observed with regard to “ethnic conflicts”. One underlying catalyst for these conflicts is often the division between “indigenes” and “settlers”. This relates to a difference between those who can claim historical family roots to an area versus those who at some point have migrated to the area. Discrimination between “indigenes” and “settlers” with regard to access to employment, political positions and public services have in many cases led to communal violence.<sup>26</sup> It has been observed however, that the majority of displaced persons in Nigeria appear not to be displaced for years as is the case in some other African countries, but most often either return to their homes, move in with family members or resettle in the proximity of their home areas soon after the violence has subsided.<sup>27</sup>

When displaced, it appears that many displaced persons seek shelter with family, friends or host communities where their ethnic group is in the majority. Others seek shelter in major towns and cities where ethnic and other identities seem to disappear while, an unknown number of people also resettle in other parts of the country. It is therefore often difficult to distinguish between movements of people forced to flee by violence and those moving for economic reasons. Consequently, reports indicate that between 150,000 and 300,000 people remained in a situation of internal displacement in Nigeria by the end of May 2015.<sup>28</sup> This number has increased significantly over the last two years. The generation of IDPs took a dramatic turn with the emergence of Islamist group called Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad in Arabic popularly known as 'Boko Haram' meaning western education is forbidden. This organization came into prominence when their leaders took up arms against the Nigerian State resulting in wanton destruction of lives and properties in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The declaration of the State of emergency in the area and the launching of a full scale military operation to check the insurgency resulted in the displacement of an estimated 20,000 people. In September 2018, statistics indicate that there are 1,707,000 displaced persons from North East Nigeria living in IDP camps.<sup>29</sup> Violence perpetrated by the militant armed group Boko Haram and military operations against the group continued to cause the bulk of new displacement in 2017 and 2018.

## Sudan

More than 30 years of civil war and tribal conflicts caused tremendous suffering for the civilian Sudanese population and generated one of the worst IDP situations in the world. In Southern Sudan, armed conflict broke out soon after Sudan gained independence in 1956.<sup>30</sup> That conflict ended in 1972, but in 1983 civil war started again between the government in Khartoum and the Sudan people's Liberation Army (SPLA). Since the conflict escalated in 1983, there were at least 2 million war-related deaths, and over 4 million people internally displaced.<sup>31</sup> Available statistics showed that there were 1.8 million IDPs in Khartoum, 500,000 in the east and 300,000 in the southern states while in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)-controlled territories, there were about 1.4 million IDPs. Currently, there are over four million conflict-caused IDPs in Sudan<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch April, 2003: 10. Print

<sup>27</sup> Egwu, S., “Ethnic Crisis and Internal Displacement in Nigeria: Socio-Political Dimensions and solutions. Paper presented at a multi stakeholders conference on internal displacement in Nigeria, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch May 2015: 25. Print.

<sup>29</sup> [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/Nigeria](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/Nigeria), assessed on 10/09/2018

<sup>30</sup> Cohen R and Deng F., op cit: 139

<sup>31</sup> O'Neill, W.G. and Cassis V., “Protecting Two Million Internally Displaced: The Successes and Shortcoming of the African Union in Darfur ,Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution – University of Bern, 2005) p. 105; Hamid, M.B., “Confrontation and Reconciliation within the African Context: The case of Sudan,” in Third World Quarterly, 1983, volume 5:2. Print.

<sup>32</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan> - 2018 humanitarian needs, assessed on 4/10/2018



The civil war in Sudan is commonly depicted as one of the Arab Muslim north versus the Negro Christian and animist South. In reality, there were complicating factors, with several armed factions and militias, as well as various ethnic groups, partly at war, partly in alliance with the government or fighting each other. The main parties were the SPLM/A, the Sudanese army and the Popular Defence Forces composed of various tribal militias. Direct exposure to military activities, often with a clear intent to alter demographic and power configuration is the main cause of displacement in Sudan. Control of territory and the appropriation of civilians' goods, as well as the denial of resources to the opposing side, were dominant war patterns.<sup>33</sup>

In 2005, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, establishing home rule for the Southern States under the Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan and providing for a referendum on secession in 2011. However, the status of some border areas was not resolved by the CPA and outbreaks of fighting continued to displace thousands of people in the areas in 2008.<sup>34</sup> By the end of 2008, 4.9 million people in Sudan were displaced by the numerous conflicts which had afflicted the country for over 2 decades; together, they made up the single largest internally displaced population in the world. Currently 5,355,000 IDPs are estimated in Sudan.<sup>35</sup>

#### RESPONSE OF STATES AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The type of internal displacement common in DRC are particularly difficult to monitor because many movements are pendular, meaning that people flee their homes, return at regular intervals and then flee again as they adapt to the rapidly evolving situation around them. The country has been in conflict for decades and evidence shows that the situation for the most vulnerable has deteriorated severely in recent years. The failure to address the underlying causes of violent conflicts results in cyclical patterns of displacement.

Years of armed conflicts and inter-communal violence has pushed millions of people into vulnerability, faced to fight off food insecurity, malnutrition and epidemic outbreaks. So, in responding to the situation of IDPs in the DRC, the position was not any different from that of other countries in terms of the fact that the Congolese government at the provincial and national level played little role to alleviate the plight of the people.<sup>36</sup> There is no legislative framework in place for the protection of IDPs even though in 2005, the government established an IDP protocol for the protection and assistance of this category of persons, although, not based on the guiding principles on internal displacement. However, the Ministry for Solidarity and Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, although, there is no legislative framework in place to guide its work, notwithstanding the fact that the country is signatory to the Kampala Convention though not ratified.<sup>37</sup>

Since signing and ratifying the African Union Convention for the protection and assistance of IDPs (also known as the Kampala Convention in April 2012, Nigeria has developed a National Policy on IDPs which will enshrine into domestic law the protections granted to IDPs in the Kampala Convention, and thus facilitate a coordinated response to IDP needs. This policy is under discussion in the House of Representatives. International humanitarian organizations have had limited presence in the country, but the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has established a presence in Abuja and the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has shown increased concern about internal displacement in Nigeria. Although the government of Sudan adopted a national IDP policy in 2009, it took few steps to implement it. However, the UNHCR expanded its mandate and provided protection to IDPs in Sudan for the first time in the agency's history during the Darfur crisis.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org) assessed on 12/6/09

<sup>34</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan> - 2018 humanitarian needs, assessed on 4/10/2018

<sup>36</sup> Haver K., "Out of Sight: Building Better Responses to Displacement in the DRC by helping Host Families, Oxfam International Research Report, September 2008, p. 10 available at <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/>; [www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc\\_0908.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc_0908.pdf) assessed August 2009; <http://www.internal-displacement.org> assessed on 01/02/10

<sup>37</sup> Haver K., "Out of Sight: Building Better Responses to Displacement in the DRC by helping Host Families, Oxfam International Research Report, September 2008, p. 10 available at <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/>; [www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc\\_0908.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/files/out-of-site-drc_0908.pdf) assessed August 2009; <http://www.internal-displacement.org> assessed on 01/02/10

<sup>38</sup> Cuenod, J. "Assistance Review Mission to the Sudan", UNHCR Mission Report, 1983, Geneva; Zolberg, A. and Callamard, A., "Displacement-Generating Conflicts and International Assistance in the Horn of Africa," in *Aid in Place of Migration* (ed) Bohning, W.R and Schroeder-Paredes M.L. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1994: 107. Print.





## RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

When huge number of people are constantly on the move because of conflict and insecurity, it can contribute to a range of humanitarian problems. Consequent upon displacement, IDPs lack access to basic services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, transportation and necessities such as food, seeds, tools, clothing, healthcare, building materials and protection concerns, which constitute the main areas where humanitarian support is needed. Children's education is also disrupted when families are displaced far from schools and facilities may also have been destroyed, occupied by combatants or used as temporary displacement shelters. After every violent conflict that renders people homeless and displaced, the displaced have to deal with a new challenge either as refugees or IDPs, of living outside their national frontiers or community where they have lived all their lives. Having survived the worst possible consequences of the events that caused their displacement, it is natural that IDPs soon start to nurse and cherish the hope of returning home once the threatening circumstances therein are abated. The persistence of threats in their former environment means that the IDPs may stay longer in their new 'home' and rebuild their lives as best as they can.<sup>39</sup>

Adjustment comes with a host of problems, the rapid slide from independent and self-sustenance to the life that is nourished by the charity and goodwill of others not only adds to the trauma but is destructive of self-esteem. While a smaller number of IDPs may continue to enjoy the sympathy, hospitality and even acceptance by the host community, a larger number may trigger xenophobic tendencies in the host community, especially where adjustment to a longer and indefinite stay implicates competition with the host community for scarce essential resources and amenities. In essence, protection support is also crucial, including psychological assistance for people who have suffered trauma and abuse during the conflicts, such as survivors of abductions, forced recruitment into armed groups and sexual violence. It should be noted that many countries where disturbances leading to the generation of IDPs occurs, have only recently established democratic rule based on popular elections. It is no surprise therefore, that one of the serious problems that

"Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa," Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1996: 152 and Francis Deng, "Frontiers of Sovereignty," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 8, no 2, 1995:249. Print. confronts IDPs is the exercise of the right to vote and be voted for during displacement. The electoral systems do not take into cognizance the emergence of large scale displacement so as to make provision for IDPs to exercise their franchise. The exercise of this right is accentuated by lack of documentation, insecurity and intimidation, restrictive residency requirement, the absence of the practice of absentee voting and lack of information.<sup>40</sup> However, Principle 22 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement<sup>41</sup> guards against not only disenfranchisement which infringes upon the rights of the internally displaced, but also shows how it exacerbates social, political, ethnic and economic marginalization.<sup>42</sup> This is because, if universal suffrage after wars is to have any meaning, then special attention is required to alleviate and overcome the peculiar problems that confront IDPs in making their voices heard.

<sup>39</sup> Nur, M. ed *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees*, New York, Zed publishers, 2005: 80. Print.; Francis Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, Terrence Lyons, Donald Rothchild and William Zartman,

<sup>40</sup> Korn, D and Weiss, T. *Internal Displacement: Conceptualization and its Consequences*, New York: Routledge, 2006: 90. Print.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, Roberta, Kalin, Walter, & Mooney Erin, eds: *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Law of the South Caucasus Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Studies in Transnational Legal Policy* No. 34 The American Society of International Law (ASIL) and the Brookings Institution, 2003: XIV. Print.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*



## COMMON DENOMINATORS

Common denominators in the countries under review in terms of the causes of displacement, government response and policy framework, indicates a lot of similarities. For instance, the causes of displacement in all countries included armed conflicts, insurgency, generalized violence, the systematic violation of human rights and the forced displacement of people by government or non-state actors. Furthermore, in the countries under review, the lack of respect for fundamental human rights and humanitarian law principles by security forces or insurgent groups-and usually both- was a leading cause of the mass flight of civilians. Indiscriminate attacks, massacres, torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment were a regular feature. Women and children were the most vulnerable of IDPs.

The women were victims of rape and sexual assault in both camp and non-camp situations, while the children were victims of forced child recruitment in countries such as DRC and Sudan. In addition, humanitarian efforts were undermined by a lack of security which seriously hampered humanitarian access to displaced populations in all cases.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an overview of the countries discussed indicates that protection and assistance to IDPs continues to be a challenge to government. Further, the absence or near absence of policies, legislations, legal frameworks and institutions for the protection of displaced persons has placed their problem on the front burner of international agenda and agencies as the only hope of the displaced, since the governments of the concerned countries have many times not exhibited the political will to take responsibility for their citizens. In some instances, they have often used the argument that IDP situations belong within their domestic sovereign jurisdiction and treated humanitarian appeals and actions concerning these matters as interference.

The challenge therefore, is to find a political solution, for which humanitarian action cannot be a substitute. Consequently, there is the need for a new approach to the resolution of IDP generating phenomena in Africa by boldly identifying the political roots of violent conflicts regardless of the coloration these conflicts assume. Political leadership in Africa must have the courage to right past wrongs and ensure that such wrongs are not repeated, while making appropriate restitutions that will engender peaceful cohabitation among citizens such that conflicts are resolved using non-violent means. It must also create the political will to ensure that returnees enjoy normal and peaceful life on a democratic and equal basis. For this to be possible, the adoption and domestication of international human rights principles in general must be the basis for contest of political power and the protection of group rights.

Happily the African Union has risen to the challenge posed by IDPs in Africa; it put in place legal and institutional frameworks and legally binding treaties of a specific and general nature that deals with the basic rights of idps. The legally binding treaty basis of the AU's activities in favour of victims of forced displacement is supplemented by decisions on specific issues. This commitment of the African Union to meeting the humanitarian challenge posed by idps will go a long way in making up of the absence/weak State institutions which should normally be saddled with such responsibilities.