

**LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN
NIGERIA BETWEEN YEARS 2010-2020: ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION OF
OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to advocate for the inclusion of outreach programs as library services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified the needs of IDPs, evaluated existing outreach programs to IDPs and designed A Total Outreach Program (ATOP). The research adopted archival method of research, drawing from extant literature relevant to its thematic concerns. Data collection for this study was a combination of descriptive survey and documentary research, featuring a critical analysis of relevant documents relating to outreach programs to IDPs in Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the sampling to get the sample size of 230 IDPs. The data analysis adopted was the textual analysis. The findings of the research showed that the needs of IDPs were medical care, clean water, and sanitized environment ranking first; education came second; accommodation ranked third; clothing ranked fourth and business start-up ranked fifth. From the above findings, it was recommended that ATOP should be planned and executed. To do this, there is a need for concerted efforts of different societal actors. Public and special-experts librarians should, therefore, seek to collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, civil societies as well as individuals. Thus, ATOP is an outreach program proposed to provide an all-round service geared towards meeting all the needs of IDPs.

Keywords: Outreach Program(me), Internally Displaced Persons, Advocacy, Inclusion, Library services.

Introduction

It is no surprise that the roles of libraries and librarians have changed and shifted. This has become possible with the advent of new technologies and innovative ideas to serve the library users better. It is important to note that these changes in technologies and ideas have affected all aspects of librarianship, such as the library services, resources, programs, and mode

of operation. Libraries expand their services to include remote services, digital services, automation among others to benefit all categories of users.

There are, however, certain groups of users who do not have express access to library services, especially the public libraries. These are the disadvantaged groups, part of which the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) belong. The clashes and conflicts that have dominated the major parts of Nigeria are one of the main causes of internal displacement. These conflicts arise due to insurgencies, political unrests, and tribal conflicts among others and have forced the residents to flee their initial place of residence to a secluded place or shelter created for them. Tracing the background and reasons of displacement in Nigeria, The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in a report in 2008 narrated that since 1999 which marked the military rule's end and the return to democratic rule with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria has witnessed several occurrences of violence outbreaks that were related to religious, ethnic and political issues. This has led to the country not only having IDPs but also catering to them.

IDPs, like any other group of persons, need to be served by the public libraries. This stems from their circumstances that necessitate information needs. Through the provision of library and information services especially outreach services; their information needs can be met and satisfied. The central view surrounding the provision of outreach services to IDPs by libraries is to meet certain goals, reach target audience and disseminate information effectively. Outreach services can take different forms depending on what need is targeted at (Maua, 2015). The academic research on public library services provided to the IDPs has provided little to no

significance on the use of outreach programs. This research, therefore, seeks to focus on advocacy for the inclusion of outreach programs to the IDPs.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Conduct a need assessment for the need for outreach programs to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach programs to the IDPs.
3. Design an outreach program tailored for the IDPs.

Literature Review

This section reviews related studies or researches that have been carried out on the information needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and outreach programs.

Needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs are mostly victims of the inhumanity of man against man. They are victims of various kind of injustices or violence confrontations, perpetrated by either their own government against them or by others, such as communal clashes, terrorism, riots, religious conflicts, natural disasters (Akuto, 2017). This implies that they are not IDPs because they chose to be, due to forced or uncontrollable circumstances, they are regarded as such. Ojo (2017) describes them as persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave homes or places of permanent residence to a temporary location in order to avoid repeated situations that placed them in that situation, such as armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of

human rights or natural or human-made disasters. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are a group of people who are forced due to circumstances beyond their control to leave a particular place to a temporary dwelling place within the borders of that particular country (Akpogome, 2015).

The focus of this literature review is on the information needs of IDPs. Although they are disadvantaged with limited opportunities and are faced with challenges, they have a need. This need is inherent to the challenges they face or necessitated by their situation. Ode (2018) identified their information needs to include information on the acquisition and supply of water, food, health care facilities. Due to the situation that categorized them as IDPs, they also have need to locate their loved ones who they have been separated from as well as a need to know when the attacks on them would end and the efforts made by the government. Benson, Onuoha and Mbagwu (2018) say that internally displaced children have need to continue their education. Their information needs must first be established and identified, it is only then the efforts of various spirited individuals, governments and other organizations toward meeting these human needs will yield positive results. Bopape et al. (2017) asserts that for a proper measurement of IDPs information needs, it is imperative to understand who they are, their background and personalities and their expectations. This would enable the librarian who will provide library and information services to them to understand necessary steps to take to meet their needs.

IDPs have needs for education, food, potable water and they expressively mentioned on the need to be able to defend themselves against rape. Healthcare, security, clothing and need to stop discrimination and exclusion rated high amongst their needs of IDPs in previous studies (Onoja, et. al 2020; Emeka & Olusegun, 2016). This has led to them not being able to take care

of themselves when down with one illness or another. With regards to health and discrimination, a number of them have HIV/AIDS and this has gone untreated and unattended to, thus, affecting their way of living (NACA, 2010).

Outreach Programs

Since libraries are service-oriented organizations, outreach programs are generally described as services offered by the library to its users who are unable to make use of the physical or electronic resources and services of the library. Malekani and Benard (2018) assert that outreach program is a term used to describe several range of activities that the library employs to meet different aspects of library and information services. Outreach programs are referred to as services extended to the disadvantaged, unserved or to the rural communities (Hali & Abu, 2017). Thus, it is used interchangeably with extension programs or extension services. They are also of the opinion that outreach programs are services provided by the library to promote its information services and reach new users. Basically, outreach programs are services offered to library users beyond the library walls (Sukula & Awasthi, 2019). The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) describes an outreach program as a community- based program which serves as a response to the need to protect and assist IDPs in a nation or community.

Maua (2015) relates outreach programs to marketing. He is of the opinion that more results are gotten as marketing increases as will outreach programs be. Effective results are achieved when more outreach programs are conducted by libraries. Libraries become relevant by providing value through outreach programs organized (Hornby&Vrbancic, 2021). As a way of

elaboration, Malekani and Benard added that it is a means by which the library could market its services to the targeted population, known as marketing mix. This can take a lot of forms especially with the advent of ICTs.

Before an outreach program is carried out, care must be taken to ensure that a needs assessment is carried out to ensure that there is a need for it in the community and to determine the requirements needed (Sukula & Awasthi, 2019; Burroughs & Wood, 2004; Shutz et al. 2014). The stages would include identifying the target community; conducting community assessment; establishing goals and objectives; develop activities and strategies; carry out implementation plan; evaluate program in between; and upgrade and adjust program as needed.

Research Methodology

The area of focus was on Benue state. The area was chosen because of high incidence of internal displacements caused by several factors leading to displacement. This paper employed the archival method of research, drawing from extant literature relevant to its thematic concerns. Data collection for this study was a combination of descriptive survey and documentary research. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the sampling to get the sample size of 230 IDPs. The data analysis adopted was the textual analysis. The textual analysis aids the researcher to analyze the content of communication instead of the formation of the content. It as well aided the use of narratives and historical documentations of the crisis of internally displaced person's crisis to understand the ideas which were expressed in written words.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that IDPs in Benue state had need for accommodation, medical care, education, feeding and good water. This was discovered in the process of conducting a need assessment for the need of outreach program. The basis of this assessment was to discover areas the libraries can help the IDPs through outreach programs.

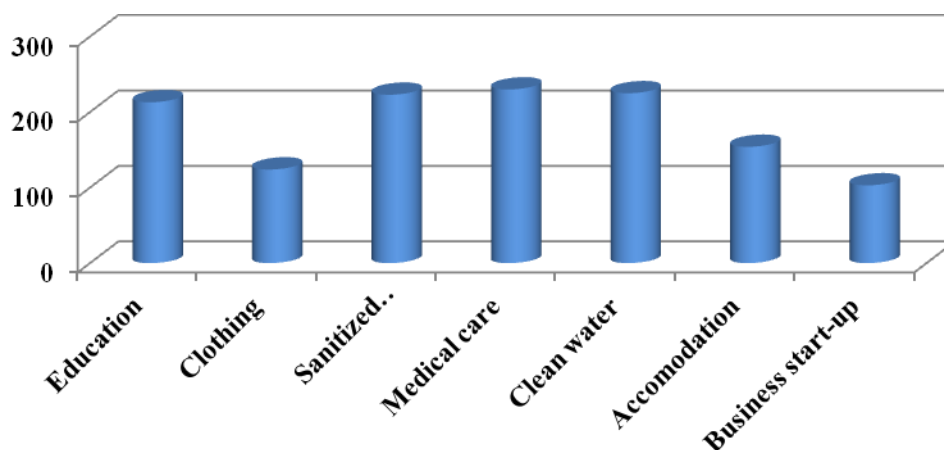


Figure 1: Rank of most important needs of IDPs

The figure above revealed that the highest ranking needs of IDPs were the need for medical care, clean water, and sanitized environment ranking first (230, 225 and 223); education came second (213); Accommodation ranked third (154); clothing ranked fourth (124) and business start-up ranked fifth with 103 IDPs indicating support. This needs assessment revealed that IDPs have more need to cope with their current situation.

Evaluating Outreach Programs for IDPs

A successful outreach program is one that incorporates proper planning and evaluations. Burroughs and Wood (2004) are of the opinion that evaluation is important to assess needs and

to improve the quality and practice of outreach programs to users. Planning and evaluating for outreach programs whether on a small or large scale is very necessary if the program is to scale through execution stage to achieve its objectives. Evaluations are both for beginning stages of planning as well as reassessment stages to modify or adapt new methods.

Outreach programs are services beyond the walls of the library and as such aims such as reaching out to users, encouraging the use of the library and its information resources as well as equipping the target population with required and necessary skills should be considered (Carter & Seaman, 2011). The advent of technology, internet and new ways to provide library and information services should be put into consideration when providing outreach programs to IDPs (Foster, 2016).

The Kiss the family steer initiative is a 2019 intervention project on education in emergency for IDPs camp in Benue state. The purpose was to increase access to quality formal education. This outreach program was planned through the following procedures: establish two functional pre-primary centres in two IDP camps; conduct workshops; provide recreation facilities for boys and girls; provide school bags; establish after school clubs for extra-curricular activities and identify parents' willingness to take on school governance roles. 5,000 children were targeted, 200 parents and volunteers.

Ani, Ugwu and Eme (2019) in their research highlighted the medical and health outreach programs of United Nations Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF) to IDPs in Benue state especially women and children. The objective was to get the unvaccinated children vaccinated and immunized against diseases. This was to lead to reduction in mortality and child morbidity

occurring from vaccine related diseases. This intervention, although sustained for a period of time was unearthed due to frequent conflict, cultural beliefs and political violence in the state.

Raji et al. (2021) in their research observed that The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been responsible for reaching out to IDPs and meeting their varied needs. Several outreach programs had been organized for IDPs such as The Assessment Capacity Project in 2018, food campaigns among others. The former identified basic needs of IDPs while the later was aimed at providing them with foods. NEMA's responses have been met with challenges due to poor coordinating capacity, logistics problems and poor funding capacity.

Onoja et al. (2020) in their study revealed that outreach programs were organized for IDPs in the form of skills training. They were trained on tailoring, cream-making, knitting and bead making. On the question of how relevant this program was on intervention to the IDPs, they were positive it met the research objective and achieved relevance. They added that an improvement in the conditions of the IDPs were due to high outreach programs organized by civil societies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

In meeting their health needs, The National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) have organized programs aimed at reaching out to IDPs with HIV/AIDS. To get them started, they educated them on the need to get them to change their behaviours towards the disease and prevention of new infections. This has yielded some levels of results over the years but the risks and exposures are still high.

Shutz et al. (2014) noted that in providing outreach programs to IDPs, libraries face challenges especially in an attempt to engage and enroll the target population intended to be served and as such innovative multi-strategy outreach approaches must be used in order to effectively seek, recruit, provide services, monitor, and retain IDPs.

It is apparent that outreach programs have been conducted for IDPs by government agencies, NGOs and well-meaning civil societies. These efforts have yielded a great level of results which include promotion of habit change, promotion of education for the children and adults, provision of food and accommodation for them. However, it has failed to meet specific needs like clean environment, health needs among others.

A Total Outreach Program (ATOP): The program proposal

This is a proactive solution to IDP. Due to poor funding of libraries, there will be a need for library partnerships with individuals, community groups, social workers and other relevant stakeholders.

Beneficiaries: Children and adults.

Budget: 1,000,000 naira

Identified Need(s): Needs for medical care, clean water, clean environment, education, accommodation, clothing, and business start-up.

Objective(s): The major objectives of the program are to:

- i. Create an enabling and a working environment for the IDPs to facilitate ease of access to innovative solutions to their needs.
- ii. Advocate for inclusion of IDPs in the society.

Procedure:

1. Need assessment

2. Reach out to stakeholders for partnerships in the aspect of funds, volunteers for service, volunteers for provision of needed resources, etc.
3. Educate IDPs on area focus such as healthcare, how to maintain a clean environment and skill acquisitions.
4. Provision of clothing and food resources.
5. Free medical check-ups and dispensing of drugs.
6. Set up a working educational practice for IDPs at all levels.

Timeline: Initial contact will run for a period of one-month.

Stakeholders: Social workers, Volunteers, Teachers, Librarians, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Government agency (National Emergency Management Agency - NEMA), Community medical centres, Community schools and religious centres.

Adequate implementation of ATOP could ameliorate the plights of internally displaced persons in Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. “A Total Outreach Program (ATOP)” should be planned, organized, executed and evaluated according to its objectives and results. Thus, ATOP is an outreach program that is designed and targeted towards IDPs proposed to provide an all-round service geared towards meeting all the needs of IDPs. To do this, there is a need for concerted efforts of different societal actors.
2. All the tiers of governments in the affected states and other stakeholders, including private sectors, international organizations, and civil society organizations have roles to play to alleviate the plight of the IDPs through improved funding.
3. The role of librarians as information professional is needed to engage the IDPs on any level they are. Librarians, due to their trainings and development, are able to serve in any capacity as

school librarians, literacy teachers, provide reference services and outreach programs personalized to the individual.

4. Public and special-experts librarians should, seek to collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, civil societies as well as individuals. By so doing, the challenges encountered by each of these units are curbed and the librarian is able to push for the outreach program.

Conclusions

Libraries and librarians are more focused on the buildings, resources and materials that we forget there are those with difficulty to access the library and its facilities such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Medrano (2022) noted that outreach programs have always been regarded as an afterthought. It is, therefore, imperative that libraries and librarians in partnership with other stakeholders reach out to IDPs to solve their needs. The needs of IDPs noted included medical care, clean water, clean environment, education, accommodation, clothing, and business start-up. To ensure that these needs are met, outreach programs must be advocated for. A total outreach program is a program the researcher advocates for after thorough examination of outreach programs that have taken place 2010-2020 in Nigeria. Libraries and information professionals have a vital role to play in ensuring that IDPs in the society are reached out to.

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