

Gender and Children Registered at Flood Camps in Makurdi in the Year 2012

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Abstract: *The study examined the registered number of persons at Makurdi flood camp in 2012 under gender and children. A total of 19683 persons were registered in the three flood camps in Makurdi. Out of this, 9,580 (48.70%) were children, 7154 (36.34%) were women and 2949 (14.60%) were men. The study used archival approach to consider the records of registered people at each of the three flood camps. Mann Whitney U test was used to test the three hypotheses formulated. The result shows that there was a significant difference between the registered number of men and women at the camp ($U(n_3, n_3) = -3; P < 0.05$). The second hypothesis which states that there will be significant difference between the number of men and children registered at the camp was also confirmed ($U(n_3, n_3) = -3; P < 0.05$). The third hypothesis predicts that there will be significant difference between the number of registered women and children at the Makurdi flood camp and it was also confirmed ($U(n_3, n_3) = -1; P < 0.05$). The results show that the number of children registered at the flood camp in Makurdi, Benue State was higher, (48.67%) followed by women (36.35%) and men (14.98%) was the least. The findings have implications for gender and children. Therefore it is suggested that policy makers should give more attention to children and women at flood camp in terms of feeding, health, accommodation and social facilities.*

Keywords: *Gender, children, floodcamp.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, issues of gender and children have become a major international concern in disaster situation such as war, fire outbreak and flood. Gender as roles ascribed to men and women and power relations that exist between them in the security as well as below the age of 17 years have drawn attention of many social workers, psychologists and health professionals at temporary refugee camps provided by governments or any other agency during flood when families are displaced. Gender issues in terms of the actual number of men, and women and children appear at every relief refugee camp all over the world. While the number of women and children are increasingly great at flood relief camps due to several factors, as a result of displacement from homes, the number of men at the flood relief camp is small. This disparity calls for gender concern and those interested in the future of children.

One of the impact of globalization is heavy rainfall and consequent flooding displacing men, women and children. In September 2012, Nigeria witnessed a devastating flood disaster which claimed 148 lives including a local Chief in Niger Delta, displaced more than 64,000 people. (Sunday Sun 2012, Oct. 14.p.5). The heavy rainfall that year in Benue State resulted into severe flood in Makurdi along River Benue. According to Akor (2013) the heavy rainfall and the released of water from Lagdo Dam in Cameroon led to River Benue and Niger over flowing their banks along with some dams and smaller rivers across the country. Apart from loss of lives and property recorded in the flood, relief camps were provided by government for more than three months. Many women and children were displaced as a result of Benue flood. Makurdi flood deserves a special attention not only because Makurdi is a state capital but the River divides the town into two

The government of Benue State consequently opened three temporary relief refugee camps in primary schools in Makurdi to shelter the flood victims. This was one of the worst floods in recent times in Benue State affecting thousands of people in Makurdi, destroying their homes, lives and

property. With families and individuals running for shelter, women and children suffered more than men from the flooded communities to the relief camps

Flood is a large amount of water that covers an area that is usually dry. It could be caused by heavy rainfall or overflowing river. Flooding is a disaster that has unpleasant effects of gender and children. One of the most frequently occurring and devastating natural disasters occasioned by climate change is flood (Potschin, 2009). While Nelson (2001) considers flood as a natural consequence of streams, Sada and Odemerho (1998) defined flood as an unusually high rates of water often leading to inundation of land adjacent to the streams which is usually caused by intense or prolonged rainfall. Ugwu and Ugwu (2013) put it that flood refers to flow of water over areas which are habitually dry. In this study flood is considered as a natural disaster arising from too much water due to heavy rainfall and or streams/River overflowing their banks or excess water Dams or underground.

1.1 Gender and Children at Flood Camp

The consequence of flood on gender and children especially in less developed countries like Nigeria are profound (Ugwu & Ugwu, 2013). Evidence shows that women suffer disproportionately in flood disasters as they are made vulnerable because of gender factor (Ehigie, 1995). Akor (2012) reported that women and children suffered more than men during the Benue flood disaster as shown by the number present at the flood camp. She reported a case of a widow and a mother of five who lost three children in Agatu Local government Area but had to be sheltered with the remaining children at the flood camp. It was also reported that women and children were the major victims of flood in Cross River State Nigeria and in Bauchi in the year 2012 and were sheltered in temporary relief camp (Akor 2013). Similarly many homes were submerged in Abakaliki in Ebonyi State, Nigeria and the women and children suffered more as recorded by their great number at the camps. In many parts of the flooded area in Nigeria in 2012, women and their children stayed days in canoes without food on their way to any of the refugee camps, seeking for temporary shelter while men disappeared to unknown places but not to the flood camp. This is explained by the fact that women lack decision making power during disaster and could not flee away from children because of gender responsibility which made them attached to children. This women and children are found together in greater number than men at flood camp. This gender disparity at flood camp must be recognized as an important strategy to address flood related consequence, in Africa. Women are emotional and are likely to suffer post traumatic stress disorder associated with flooding experiences (Ugwu & Ugwu, 2013) and other psychological problems.

All categories of people are affected by the devastating effect of flood at the camp; however, Olumide (2008) and Mordi (2011) are of the view that the majority of flood victims at the camp are women and children. In fact all over the world women and children are treated the same by cultural values and they are found together at flood camp. In a study on flood impact on women and children in Cambodia by DIPECHO (2002), it was found that women and girls suffer more than men during flood disaster. The study further found that gender relations influence response to flood disaster

By implication, greater number of women and children at flood camps means they have greater psychological problems arising from separation from homes than men; greater difficulty in adjustment to camp situation especially overcrowded apartment with people they have never met before and ill health problems.

The objective of this study therefore was to examine gender differences and the number of children officially registered at the Makurdi flood camp in Benue State in 2012 and to suggest policy for their management. And to guide the study, the following three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of statistical significance:

- i. There will be significant gender difference between the total number of registered men and women at Makurdi flood camps.
- ii. There will be significant difference between the number of men and children registered at the Makurdi flood camps.

iii. There shall be significant difference between the number of women and children registered at Makurdi flood camps.

2. METHOD

The study used archival approach to consider the records of flood victims by sex and children (below 17 years) in camps located in three primary schools in Makurdi. A total of 19683 refugees were recorded in the three camps namely Saint Theresa Primary School (4586), Saint Catherine Primary School (3277) and NKST Primary School Wadata (3672). Out of the total population, 9,586 (48.70%) were children, 7152 (36.34%) were women and 2949 (14.96%) were men. The three flood camps were used to get a complete picture of gender and children recorded at the camps.

The researchers visited each of the camps between 3-6 PM for three days when flood camp officials and victims were present. The purpose of the study was explained at each camp to the camp commandant to get official number of the registered flood victims. Relevant documents were made available to the researchers at each camp and the data collected.

Mann Whitney U test was used to test the research hypotheses since the data collected was not normally distributed.

3. RESULTS

The records of men, women and children were obtained per each location of the flood camp at primary schools in Makurdi. The overall total and percentages were obtained by each category under study. The result is presented below.

Table 1. Location of flood camp; gender and children registered

Location of flood camp	No. of men	No. of Women	No. of Children	Total
St. Theresa Primary School	728	1227	2631	4586
St Catherine Primary School	1001	2821	3277	7099
NKST Primary School Wadata	1220	3106	3672	7998
Total	2949	7154	9580	19683
Mean	983	2384.67	3193.33	
Percentage	14.60	36.34	48.70	

From table one, the result shows that there were more children (mean = 3193.33 or 48.70%) registered at Makurdi flood camps, followed by women (mean = 2384.67 or 36.34%) and men (mean = 983 or 14.96%) were the least.

Further analysis shows that there was a significant difference in the number of men and women registered at flood camps in Makurdi ($U (n_3 n_3) = -3; p < 0.05$). Number of children at the camp also differed significantly from the number of men ($U (n_3 n_3) = -3; P < 0.05$). Finally, results also indicated that total number of women registered at the camp differed significantly from that of children ($U (n_3 n_3) = -1, P < 0.5$).

4. DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine the differences in the number of men, women and children registered at flood camp in Makurdi. Findings show that the total number of men registered at the camp differed significantly from that of women. Results clearly indicated that women (mean = 2384) were higher than men (mean = 983) at the camp. This shows gender disparity as men fled and left the women and children at the Makurdi flood camp. The men were likely to have gone to friends and relations for shelter. The gender difference observed between the number of men and women at the flood is explained in term of cultural factors that place men above women and as

well as the universal devaluation of women that grouped women together as children. It is not surprising therefore that their number at the camp was higher than men since they were expected to stay close to children at the camp because they are responsible for socialization of children. In support of this finding, Akor (2013) reported that the majority of the flood victims at camp in Cross River State of Nigeria who were sheltered in temporally were women. Out of the total number of women (71, 54) officially registered at the camp, 92 (1.30%) were pregnant and 186 (2.60%) were breast feeding mothers, while at the flood camp in Makurdi, a women delivered at the camp. Also, Sunday Sun (14th Oct. P.5) reported that out of 20, 000 people at flood camp in Cross-River State of Nigeria, 5,000 were pregnant women, 11 babies were delivered in one week at the camp including triplet and two sets of twins, while another 2,000 women were expected to put to bed. This findings support the high number of women and children at the Makurdi flood camp.

The second hypothesis which states that the number of children at the camp will be significantly higher than the number of men was also confirmed. And children (mean = 3193.33) were found to be more in number than men (mean = 983). The high number of children at the camps is explained by the fact that children have to be close to their mothers for feeding and nurturance and not father. In addition more babies were delivered at the camp increasing the number of children. Furthermore, the third hypothesis which states that the total number of women registered at the camp shall significantly differ from children was upheld. The number of children (mean = 3193.33) at the camp out weighs that of women (mean = 2384.67).

Thus Craig (1994) observed that among the refugee population in Africa, more than three quarters were women and children. Women therefore tend to bear a disproportionate amount of suffering and hardship resulting from refugee status at camp because they are required to care for the children at the camp. The heavy presence of children at the Makurdi flood camp (including the Disabled and sick ones) presented additional burden to the women as they played their gender roles while men were away as indicated by their low presence at the camp. They were not available to give the needed support to women and children. According to Ugwu & Ugwu (2013) the men went to nearby communities to do manual jobs as bread winners and economic provider instead of staying at the flood camps. This gender role accounts for the low men's population at the flood camp. Another cultural expectation is that men are not suppose to or live together with women and children in the same room.

5. CONCLUSION

The finding of this study has implication for gender disparity and child care during flood disaster management. The study established a wide gab between the number of men, women and children registered at the camp. For proper family integration in times of flood disaster and managements, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Men should be encouraged to be close to their wives and children in flood camps that are provided. Gender equality and social justice in family and society will help to bridge the gaps that are found in this study.
2. Government should have flood policy on ground that will specifically address the problem of women and children at flood camp more than men's needs. This includes feeding, provision of health facilities, Mobile schools, sporting activities etc.
3. Pre-flood disaster information should be provided regularly to men, women and children at raining seasons to prepare them ahead of time
4. The structure of flood camps should reflect more on women and children characteristics.
5. There should be inclusion of developmental and clinical psychologists in management of children and women in psychological stress arising from the displacement and pregnancy.

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