INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW

MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 7 | Issue 3

2024

Follow this and additional works at: https://www.ijlmh.com/

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (https://www.vidhiaagaz.com/)

In case of **any suggestions or complaints**, kindly contact **Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com**.

To submit your Manuscript for Publication in the **International Journal of Law Management & Humanities**, kindly email your Manuscript to **submission@ijlmh.com.**

Predictive Modelling of Conflict-Induced Forced Displacement in West Africa

Aashi Sharma[1], Harshita[2] and Naman Kachroo[3]

Abstract

The growing forced displacement in West Africa, within and across the borders of countries, is a direct consequence of the increasing threat to the lives of millions of people due to coup d'états fuelled by state and non-state actors. Policy challenges; principles and practice of asylum; insecurity in refugee-populated areas; and return and reintegration of displaced people form the thick of the predicaments faced by refugees as well as internally displaced people in West Africa. West Africa is experiencing another spree of forced displacement after the array of civil wars and military coups that broke out in Mali (2020), Niger (2021 and 2023), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Sudan (2021), Burkina Faso (2022). The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's report on internal displacement in West Africa (2006) cited that the total number of IDPs in West Africa may be a little over 1 million at this point but there lies potential for massive forced displacement in the region. This research paper aims to address the predicaments faced by the victims of forced displacement in West Africa using a modular framework. Lack of acceptance in host communities and social networks fear and uncertainty of not being able to return home, infrastructural deficits, lack of economic opportunities and human rights abuses are the major heads that lay the ground for the predictive modelling. The latter, in turn, would be useful for determining the incidence of conflict-induced forced displacement in West Africa and the consequences faced by the displaced population.

Keywords*: Conflict, Forced Displacement, Internally-displaced Persons, Refugees, West Africa.*

I. Introduction

The growing forced displacement in West Africa, within and across the borders of countries, is a direct consequence of the increasing threat to the lives of millions of people due to coup d'états fuelled by state and non-state actors. This stirs a great deal of uncertainty about life and property among the people with limited access to necessities and a stable livelihood. More so, the consequences of displacement have proven to have a lasting impact on future generations on

---

[1] Author is a student at Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab, India.
[2] Author is a student at Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab, India.
[3] Author is a student at Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab, India.

end. Policy challenges; principles and practice of asylum; insecurity in refugee-populated areas; and return and reintegration of displaced people form the thick of the predicaments faced by refugees as well as internally displaced people in West Africa.

The first civil war that broke out in Liberia at the end of 1989 impinged an intractable cycle of conflict and displacement across West Africa.[4] Fast forward to today, West Africa is experiencing another spree of forced displacement after the array of civil wars and military coups that broke out in Mali (2020), Niger (2021 and 2023), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Sudan (2021), Burkina Faso (2022).

People have been forced or obliged to leave their homes in West Africa as a result of armed conflict, instances of widespread violence, and abuse of human rights. Resource availability, including unresolved conflicts over ownership of land and property rights, pervasive poverty, and high rates of young unemployment all play a role in displacement which occurs repeatedly in several West African nations. Deliberate use of displacement by warring parties to secure or reinforce their control of territory, resources and people makes the most disadvantaged groups bear the brunt ranging from women to children to senior citizens.[5] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's report on internal displacement in West Africa (2006) cited that the total number of IDPs in West Africa may be a little over 1 million at this point but there lies potential for massive forced displacement in the region. The report qualified the test of time since the number of IDPs in Burkina Faso alone rose to 1.5 million in 2021 which forms a part of West Africa. Moreover, it is pertinent to keep in mind that data on internally displaced people is a subset of the forced displacement data.

This research paper aims to address the predicaments faced by the victims of forced displacement in West Africa using a modular framework. Intra-West-African Migration receives less attention from academics despite the significant numbers involved which makes it strenuous to predict the consequences faced by the refugees and IDPs there. Lack of acceptance in host communities and social networks fear and uncertainty of not being able to return home, infrastructural deficits, lack of economic opportunities and human rights abuses are the major heads that lay the ground for the predictive modelling. Furthermore, this paper takes into account the case studies of West African countries which act as a yardstick or basis for the model. The latter, in turn, would be useful for determining the incidence of conflict-induced

---

[4] *Regional Report: In the Need of Durable Solutions - the Revolving Door of Internal Displacement in West Africa – Liberia*, Relief Web (Apr. ,2006), reliefweb.int/report/liberia/regional-report-need-durable-solutions-revolving-door-internal-displacement-west.

[5] Jeff Crisp, *Forced Displacement in Africa: Dimensions, Difficulties and Policy Directions,* Unhcr.Org (Jul. ,2006), www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/44b7b758f.pdf.

forced displacement in West Africa and the consequences faced by the displaced population.

II. LACK OF ACCEPTANCE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Fleeing conflict and persecution comes with a quintessential set of challenges no matter whether the movement is within or across the borders of a country. The inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons in the societies and communities to which they migrate is one of the challenges. Social inclusion can be achieved by ensuring the same rights for all citizens alike, forging ties and friendships, and ensuring access to basic necessities like housing, healthcare, education etc.[6] Failure to foster a sense of solidarity among the refugees and internally displaced persons leads to a situation of social exclusion and in extreme cases xenophobia. This gives rise to a sense of hostility and discrimination among the immigrants based on their ethnicity, race, religion, income, language etc. As a result, they are perceived as a threat to the local culture, economy and security. Often, this leads to violence if not abated at a nascent stage.

The lack of basic needs leads may IDPs to fall prey to inhumane circumstances such as sexual exploitation in exchange for food, rape, forced marriage, and other detrimental situations, either at the hands of their host communities or armed militants.[7] Such circumstances compel one to look at social inclusion from a multi-dimensional perspective since it impacts the whole of society.

III. WEST AFRICAN STATUS QUO

West Africa, being the focal point of the research, is experiencing a phenomenon called 'mixed migration' which refers to "cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities." [8]

For instance, Boko Haram insurgents started their campaign of terror against the Borno state of Nigeria in the North-east in 2009, lives and property has been lost forcing the most affected section to flee their homes in search of a socially inclusive space. Available statistics show that Nigeria has the highest number of displaced persons in Africa which is estimated at 3.3 million people as of 2014 (IDMS, 2014 and NRC, 2014). IDPs who fled to neighbouring communities

---

[6] *Social Inclusion of Refugees*, Unhcr.Org (Apr. 2019), www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5fc126354.pdf.
[7] Donald Inwalomhe, *Abuse of Women in IDPs,* The Guardian, (Apr. 2021), guardian.ng/opinion/abuse-of-women-in-idps/.
[8] *Mixed Migration Centre West Africa*, Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (2021), mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/qmmu-q1-2021-wa.pdf.

are forced to begin life afresh in their host communities where they are abandoned to their fates. In these communities, they are regarded as strangers and denied their socio-economic rights.[9]

Burkina Faso, a country in the Sahel region, confronts a similar set of problems when it comes to the assimilation of refugees and internally displaced persons into mainstream society on the heels of a military coup. Insecurity in northern Burkina Faso drove over 28,000 Burkinabe out of their homes as per the UNHCR Burkina Faso Operational Update- October 2018.[10] The conflict has displaced about one in ten people in Burkina Faso. As most of the displacement sites are in urban areas with enough facilities and safety compared to their places of origin, most of the IDPs have reported wanting to stay in the host location. Nonetheless, humanitarian support is still a dire need for the rapidly increasing displaced population.[11]

Mali, another conflict-ridden West African country, has been undergoing military coups since the 1970s. This can be corroborated by the recent coup d'état in Mali led by the Malian Armed Forces in 2020. Despite concessions offered and mediation by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the armed forces did not relent. The presence of Jihadi groups and the 2012-armed campaign launched by the Movement for the National Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) contributed to the environment of terror and conflict that reign over Mali. The right to legal identity and access to birth certificates is another complex facet of social exclusion that, is directly, related to the legal ostracization of the displaced population. A study in 2020 found that 29% of IDPs in the Mopti region (centre) did not have civil documents, as against 20% in Ansongo and 17% Gundam areas (Gao region north), and 11% in the Niono area.[12]

According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, principle 14 states that 'every IDP has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence' and should therefore receive equal treatment wherever they choose to live. A study conducted by the UNHCR and other humanitarian actors was aimed at examining cases to crystallise the need to extend support to host families as well as IDPs.[13] Most cases point to the need to support host

---

[9] Anthony Itumo, *Nigerian State and Responses to Plights of Persons Internally Displaced*, International Knowledge Sharing Platform (2016), core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234675266.pdf.

[10] *Burkina Faso - Global Focus,* Unhcr (Oct. 2018), reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Burkina%20Faso%20Factsheet%20-%20June%202017.pdf.

[11] *Burkina Faso. Conflict-Induced Displacement*, Observatorio de Los Derechos Humanos, (Apr. 14, 2023), boletinderechoshumanos.wordpress.com/2023/04/06/burkina-faso-conflict-induced-displacement/.

[12] Daniel Ozoukou, *Children Affected by Displacement and the Right to Legal Identity in Mali*, Researching Internal Displacement (Jan. 31 2022), researchinginternaldisplacement.org/short_pieces/children-affected-by-displacement-and-the-right-to-legal-identity-in-mali/#_ftn8.

[13] Anne Davis, *IDPs in Host Families and Host Communities: Assistance for Hosting Arrangements*, UNHCR, (2012) www.unhcr.org.

communities as well as individual families, both to alleviate the pressure on community resources and to prevent or reduce the tensions inherent in sharing them.[14]

The case studies of Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso are a testimony to the prevalence of lack of acceptance and social exclusion of refugees and IDPs into host communities. Even though the specific problems faced by the displaced populations differ from one country to another due to the varying nature of conflict, power dynamics and other geo-political factors, the circumstances at hand are similar in essence.

Failing to put an end to displacement can result in increased and continued vulnerabilities and can ,in turn, negatively impact hosting communities leading to serious economic, political and security implications.[15] As a result, it is imperative to come up with durable solutions for refugees and IDPs who fall prey to conflict-induced forced displacement. Durable solutions work towards the creation of a conducive environment for the displaced as well as the host communities.

(A) Lack of Livelihood Opportunities

As West Africa steps into 2023, new difficulties await it in the form of a recent coup d'état in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. These coups have resulted in the displacement of more than 2.5 million people who are now down and out looking for some stable source of income. A look at West Africa's Governance indicators, as measured by the World Bank shows that West Africa has scored below zero for an indicator that ranges from -2.5 to 2.5,[16] showing its deteriorating condition. The major factors for this performance include political instability, violence and terrorism. Based on the analysis of data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], countries have increased military expenditure eightfold to fight against internal and external threats which has resulted in the diversion of spending on essential services [like creating jobs] leading to unemployment.[17] Also, instability brings political risk, which drives investors away, making the situation more dire.[18]

The economic impact of displacement is related to the loss of livelihood which has a rippling effect on the basic needs and requirements of the IDPs and Refugees in the West-African countries. These countries have an alarming poverty rate and high underemployment rate. The

---

[14]*Id.* at 10.

[15]   *Solutions for Displacement,* Essentials of Migration Management 2.0 (Jan. 2024), emm.iom.int/handbooks/solutions-and-recovery/solutions-displacement.

[16]Bright Simons, *Will Rising Insecurity Erase West Africa's Economic Development Gains?,* Brookings (May 29, 2023), www.brookings.edu/articles/will-rising-insecurity-erase-west-africas-economic-development-gains/.

[17]*Id* at 13.

[18]*supra* note 14

thing that most of the IDPs have found a place in already susceptible areas where food insecurity, malnutrition, and epidemics are widespread makes the situation worse. The IDPs here are facing considerable degradation in living conditions like insufficient quantity of water, basic sanitation services, open-air defecation and unavailability of hygiene products for women.

Boko Haram insurgency as a state actor in Nigeria has led to the closedown of schools which makes education difficult to access and therefore dampening the prospective employment opportunities. The dearth of economic opportunities has a dissenting impact on health as well. Access to food is the main priority for IDPs and in order to save food for their children they resort to negative coping strategies like reducing meals to one time a day. IDPs in Chad are facing similar difficulties, making them largely dependent on external humanitarian assistance.

For instance, in Mali, many IDPs are heavily affected by the food and nutrition crisis, and 67 per cent of them are entirely dependent on the host family for their food needs. Loss of revenue-generating activities accounts for about 14 per cent of the total impacts. This is grounded on the fact that 56 per cent of IDPs have lost their source of income during displacement which makes their living condition worse.[19] More than 50 per cent of IDPs face documentation problems as a result of the non-issuance, interruption of issuance and/or loss of their documents since the beginning of the crisis.[20] This significantly hampers their freedom of movement, ability to access civil, economic and political rights and access to justice and basic social services such as education and health.

Niger is also in reduced circumstances mainly due to the first Boko Haram attacks that happened in the Diffa region of Niger. These attacks become the cause of unprecedented security and humanitarian crises. Food insecurity forms the major chunk of all the economic consequences faced by the migrants, severe malnutrition has already gulped the region. IDPs are living in precarious sanitary conditions which has led them to face an epidemic of hepatitis E in 2017. Livelihood opportunities like fishing and agropastoral production remain limited due to security reasons. Around 80 per cent of the displaced people are in perilous situations as they lack shelter and essential water facilities.[21]

The number of IDPs has increased drastically in Nigeria after Boko Haram's militancy in 2009. Many are dependent on humanitarian food assistance due to inflation, disrupted trade flows, a drop in agriculture production and the closure of the market in conflict-ridden areas have largely

---

[19]*Mali: Appel Global 2012 – Mali,* ReliefWeb, (Jun. 15, 2012), reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-appel-global-2012.
[20]*Mali: Aperçu Des Besoins Humanitaires 2015 (23 Janvier 2015) – Mali,* ReliefWeb, (Mar. 3, 2015) reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-aper-u-des-besoins-humanitaires-2015-23-janvier-2015.
[21] *Niger: 2017 Aperçu Des Besoins Humanitaires (Novembre 2016) – Niger*, ReliefWeb (Nov. 19, 2016), reliefweb.int/report/niger/niger-2017-aper-u-des-besoins-humanitaires-novembre-2016.

reduced their access to food. The problems compounded due to a lack of job opportunities and competition for existing jobs in the host communities. Prior to the crisis, more than 80% of IDPs identified agriculture or livestock as their primary means of income. This increases reliance on outside aid. In the near run, it becomes unavoidable. Only 20% of IDPs have some form of revenue. When compared to having a national employment rate of around 50%, Approximately 60% of formerly employed IDPs have lost their job and income as a result of the conflict-induced displacement.[22]

The case study of Burkina Faso also underscores the desperate need for shelter in remote locations faced by the migrants and the harsh weather conditions taking a toll on them.[23] Kalizeta, a victim of the displacement stated, "I felt at home in Burkina Faso, I was in a good house, I slept peacefully, I ate my fill. But when armed groups came, everything [changed]," she added. "We couldn't even cultivate our fields; the harassment was constant."[24]This justifies the fact that the livelihood of the migrants is in the doldrums in many countries of West Africa and there is much need for international support.

ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] established in 1975 is a step towards integrating the economies of West Africa and its main goal is to promote economic cooperation among member states in order to raise living standards and promote economic development in West Africa.[25]

(B) Human rights abuse

Western Africa, one of those regions known for its richness in ecology as well as an abundance of natural resources and historical significance, has long been affected by human rights abuses including political repression, armed conflicts, coups and ethnic conflicts. One of the serious consequences of this problem is the large-scale displacement of these inhabitants or in other words we can term it as conflict-induced migration.

Various kinds of human rights abuses have been reported in Western Africa some of them take place in the form of:

1) Political Suppression

---

[22] *Unveiling the Cost of Internal Displacement,* IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre www.internal-displacement.org/publications/unveiling-the-cost-of-internal-displacement.

[23]Babar Baloch, *UNHCR Warns Chronic Lack of Resources Contributing to New Crisis in Burkina Faso,* UNHCR (Dec. 12 2022), www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-warns-chronic-lack-resources-contributing-new-crisis-burkina-faso.

[24]Lalla Sy Togo, *Rising Violence Drives Refugees From Burkina Faso to Neighbouring Countries,* UNHCR, (Jul. 25 2023), www.unhcr.org/news/stories/rising-violence-drives-refugees-burkina-faso-neighbouring-countries.

[25]*Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS),* United States Trade Representative, ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/regional-economic-communities-rec/economic-community-west-african-states.

2) Gender-based violence

3) Coups

4) Ethnic Conflicts

(C) Political suppression

Political suppression has been frequently seen in the region of Western Africa. It comprises policies such as surveillance abuse, police brutality, imprisonment, stripping of the rights of the citizen, forced disappearance, electoral fraud etc.

Below are a few case studies of Western Africa where political suppression was observed:

- **The Gambia**: Yahya Jammeh's 22-year rule in Gambia was marked by widespread abuses, including forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detention. He sought exile in Equatorial Guinea in January 2017 after losing the December 2016 presidential election to Adama Barrow[26]. Many cases of human rights abuses have been reported under his regime one of them was the Gambian student massacre and the other one took place in 2005 where over 50 migrants from different Western African countries were killed.

- **Ivory Coast:** This is said to be a case of electoral fraud. The case study is of the controversial 2010 presidential election where the serving president Gbagbo refused to step down from his post even after the election results were in the favour of his opponent Alassane Ouattara. Gbagbo having the support of his military came back to power again whereas Ouattara had international backing and made his rebel force come to power[27]. In this process of power struggle, various human rights abuses were committed by both sides.

- **Nigeria**: Despite its reputation as a mostly stable democracy, the country has seen times of political repression. Many journalists and political activists fell prey to arbitrary detentions or ill-treatment by the government in the 1980s and 1990s. Also, the state's deployment of security forces to curb protests was seen as political suppression.**[28]**

---

[26]*Yahya Jammeh | Human Rights Watch,* Yahya Jammeh | Human Rights Watch (Jun. 26, 2019) www.hrw.org/tag/yahya-jammeh.

[27]*Côte D'Ivoire - Disputed Election, Political Standoff,* Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Cote-dIvoire.

[28]Wale Adebanwi, *The Radical Press and Security Agencies in Nigeria: Beyond Hegemonic Polarities,* African Studies Review, 54 A.S.R. 3, 45–69 (2011).

(D) Gender-based violence

Political unrest in Western Africa fuels the problem of gender-based violence. Women and girls are frequently victims of sexual abuse, coercion, and exploitation during conflicts and power struggles. The absence of law and order results in the crimes going unpunished. Conditions in the refugee camps are also worse for women and many of the cases of gender-based violence arise there only as there is no proper surveillance over there, making the problems for the refugees as well as IDPs more dangerous. For these conditions to improve setup of democratic institutions needs to be done which further improves the quality of the legal system by providing an independent judicial system and an accountable security force.

Various cases of child labour, abduction, sexual exploitation, child soldiers, and human trafficking have been reported in various riot-ridden countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mali etc.

Discrimination of LGBTQ+ communities is also very prevalent in this scenario.[29]

Also, in the Boko Haram insurgency, many cases of mass abduction were reported.[30]

(E) Coups

Western Africa is one of the few regions which is very much prone to military coups. According to the data Africa has witnessed over 200 coup attempts till 2012 out of which Western Africa accounted for 44.4 % of those. The last successful coup that West Africa saw was of Burkina Faso which happened on 24 January 2023[31].

There are several ways in which human rights abuses take place inside a coup-ridden country

a) **Through the means of extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention:** Usually opposing political leaders especially those whom the coup-based government perceives as threats are on the receiving ends of these actions. They are held by the security forces without the proper evidence against them or on false charges and are sent for execution without following proper legal procedures.

b) **Heavy censorship:** The authoritative government often bans various article sites, news

---

[29]Neela Ghoshal, *Every Day I Live in Fear": Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT People in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and Obstacles to Asylum in the United States* HRW (Oct. 7 2020), www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/07/every-day-i-live-fear/violence-and-discrimination-against-lgbt-people-el-salvador.

[30]Elizabeth Pearson & Jacob Zenn, *The Female Abduction Surge in Niger." Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Surge in Female Abductions in Southeastern Niger*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (2021), http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29499.6. Accessed 30 Oct. 2023.

[31]Hakeem Onapajo & Muhammad Dan Suleiman, *Why West Africa Has Had so Many Coups and How to Prevent More,* The Conversation (Feb. 15 2022), theconversation.com/why-west-africa-has-had-so-many-coups-and-how-to-prevent-more-176577.

channels, and social media apps that they think are trying to defame their ways of governance and oppose the propaganda that they are trying to spread.

c) **Threat to judicial independence:** The leaders often try to restrict the independence of the judiciary to get rid of their wrongdoings easily.

d) **Serious economic impacts i.e. its deterioration can be seen:** One can observe these impacts from a very large aspect to a very minute aspect as well i.e. reduction in foreign direct investment to those countries to disturbance in the daily life of the people residing who are suffering from the scarcity of basic resources.

e) **Causes refugee crisis:** These kinds of government often target particular ethnic groups which in turn cause fleeing away of that particular part of the population from the region and also fear of living under authoritative rule can also cause displacement crisis like was seen in 2021 when Taliban took over Afghanistan.

Several cases of coups have been reported in various West African countries like Mali, Burkina Faso Mauritania etc. which has been proven disastrous for the region's economic and social development.

(F) **Ethnic conflicts**

In West Africa, ethnic conflicts are an ongoing and disturbing issue, leading to significant human rights violations and instability. Historical grievances, resource competition, and ethnic polarization are frequently fueling this violence. The effects are terrible, with serious human rights violations such as mass killings, forced relocation, gender-based violence, property and livelihood damage, and violations of child rights (child labour).

Case studies in Western Africa where cases of ethnical conflicts have been observed are as follows: -

a. Nigerian Ethno-religious conflict

b. Mauritanian ethnic cleansing

c. Mali (cultural destruction)

d. Malian Tuareg rebellion

e. Nigerian farmer and herders conflict

(G) **Infrastructural Deficits**

Despite the high number of migrants involved in intra-West African migration, the work on education, mobility, infrastructure, housing and shelter remains in the doldrums. The condition

of Refugees is more perverse as they are usually relocating between equally poor neighbourhoods and communities and thereby have to pay taxes on already scarce resources such as healthcare, education, housing and transport services at the relocated destination.[32] The conflict in these countries increases the strain on infrastructure, especially affecting women, children and the elderly.

a. *Difficulty in accessing education*:

The research shows that parents do not enrol migrant children into schools due to a lack of information about the working of educational systems in host countries. The ignorance of the ins and outs of the educational institutions in their new country makes it more difficult for them to take advantage of the educational opportunities.

The same can be corroborated by the case study of Ghana where parents are not aware of the fee-free public-school education offered at the basic level. This was confirmed by a migrant in Ghana. *Sadat, a migrant parent from Mali stated: "We have been in this country for close to a year. I have a wife and two children. I don't think about education in this country. I am not aware of any of the laws that govern education in Ghana. I am not aware that education is free at the basic level. This is new to me. I will try and verify what you said and take my children to school provided it is true that education at the basic level is free."*[33]

Temporary stay in the place of migration also left children with no access to education. Migration at an older age also makes it difficult for the migrant to adjust to the schooling system as compared to migrants who were enrolled at a younger age, the dropout rate is also greater among the former. Many times, inconsistency between the norms and values of the migrants and the host country emerges as a reason for parents not to send their children to school. Migrants also cited cost and lack of affordability as a reason for keeping their children out of school as they struggle for food and housing and keep education among secondary priorities. Fati, a migrant child, also stated her ordeal*, "My sister and I do beg for our parents. I do not know about Western education. We have never been to such schools before. I prefer to live in Niger because that is my home country and I have more friends there. We are here just for better living conditions."*[34] Moreover, the infrastructure needed to impart education also gets dilapidated in war-torn areas, leaving the children with no secure means of getting knowledge.

---

[32]*Migration Dynamics, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa | United Nations,* United Nations, www.un.org/en/academic-impact/migration-dynamics-refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons-africa.
[33] Mora McLean, West African Youth Challenges and Opportunity Pathways (2019).
[34] *Id* at 30.

b. *Inadequate Healthcare Infrastructure*:

IDPs and refugees do not have access to basic healthcare facilities and are prone to various diseases. The ordeal for women is graver as they lack basic hygiene and sanitation which is very much required during the menstrual period. Children and elders remain in the direst condition to access healthcare in conflict-ridden areas. Moreover, due to the paucity of healthcare units, migrants have to travel long distances to reach the nearest healthcare facility. Migrants often come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds which can create miscommunication with the healthcare providers and can lead to misdiagnoses. High healthcare costs also make it difficult for migrants to cover medical expenses. Preventive care like vaccinations, maternal health services and regular check-ups remain elusive. Migrants without legal documentation may be reluctant to seek healthcare services due to fears of deportation or other legal consequences. Migrants remain prone to infectious disease outbreaks Ebola eruption in Nigeria in 2014.

c. *The problem of inadequate housing*:

Migrant workers (particularly irregular migrant workers with low incomes) frequently live in small private rented rooms or flats, properties arranged or provided by employers, slum dwellings, and overcrowded houses of relatives and friends because they are usually not entitled to subsidised housing and face discrimination and numerous obstacles in accessing private and public housing. Another critical feature is segregation within the recipient country's urban structure of migrant living conditions: stereotyping, xenophobia, and distrust of irregular migrants and refugees, as well as the construction of obstacles to keep them out of the local community, contribute to their exclusion and isolation from the urban space. Irregular migrants face violence, forced evictions and homelessness. Moreover, the temporary shelters that are provided by cities, namely for refugees and homeless persons, are often overcrowded and do not cater to the specific needs of groups such as women and girls.[35] This makes it difficult for the migrants to acquire secure housing facilities.

d. Fear and Uncertainty of Not Being able to return home

Forced displacement due to persecution and war impinges a sense of protracted uncertainty which is associated with increased psychological distress owing to the insecure living conditions such as in refugee camps and transitional countries. This sense of uncertainty and fear has a deleterious impact on an individual's health via detention in refugee camps and

---

[35] *Housing for Migrants and Refugees in the UNECE Region*, Unece.Org, unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Housing%20for%20Migrants_compressed_0.pdf.

asylums, public degradation and undermining healthcare services. The raging armed conflict in West Africa is linked to the rise of violent extremism and the proliferation of armed non-state groups such as Boko Haram, Al Qaeda- affiliated Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) etc. This worsening security situation diminishes the possibility for the resettlement of the displaced population which is bearing the brunt of the crisis in refugee camps, transition countries or displaced within their own countries.

The uncertainty regarding one's resettlement prospects is often compounded by having family and friends stuck in situations of ongoing conflict or restrictive access to services and resources. These contextual factors which vary from one region to another mean that refugees experience substantial fear for the future.[36]

The 2021 Coup d' etat led by the Guinean army officers resulted into the arrest of the president and the dissolution of the government. The refugees were squeezed between the Guinean army and Guinean dissidents operating out of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Refugee camps were attacked by the raiders. The majority of the refugees were trapped in an area known as the "Parrot's Beak" where the borders of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia meet. Their situation is plagued with unpredictability owing to the logistical nightmares and lack of access to humanitarian corridors.[37]

The 2023 military coup in Niger has made local villages flee due to jihadist insurgencies. After France's withdrawal from the region, a new security pact with Mali and Burkina Faso promises longed for stability. Abdoul Razak Soumana, an Internally Displaced Person fled his village after he saw his neighbours get killed by Islamic terrorists.

"We have suffered so much because of the terrorists. We are forced to leave our villages. The terrorists warned us but we didn't believe them at first. Then one day, they came and burnt all of our grain storage, took away our livestock and destroyed all of our acquisitions. And that was the day we fled to the Tillabery region."

Having no access to their land, house or livestock, the refugees Tillabery were in a dire situation. To prevent the hand-to-mouth state, women tried to make some money by weaving baskets and straw mats. This settlement had over 3000 refugees as well as IDPs. Conflicts over resources are also prevalent. The IDPs pinned their hope on the new military government which would

---

[36]Anglea Nickerson, *Intolerance of Uncertainty, Posttraumatic Stress, Depression, and Fears for the Future among Displaced Refugees.* Journal of Anxiety Disorders, Science Direct (Jan. 16 2023), www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0887618523000105.

[37]*West Africa Crisis – Guinea,* Relief Web, (Mar. 9 2001), reliefweb.int/report/guinea/west-africa-crisis.

make their prospects of going back home better. The dearth of psychological support leaves the affected masses on edge which triggers a sense of uncertainty.

The two conflict-ridden countries of West Africa i.e., Burkina Faso and Mali have seen an exchange of refugees on account of the insecurity in both the countries. In 2020, some 14,000 people fled their homes in Burkina Faso in just 17 days. Violence forced many of them to flee to neighbouring Mali. Likewise, Malian refugees who had sought protection in Burkina Faso have been rendered stateless since they don't find it safe to either be in Burkina Faso or remain in Mali.[38]

The growing fear and uncertainty among West African refugees and IDPs makes it imperative to support these vulnerable communities. Strengthening social cohesion among communities, making strong links and increasing access to livelihood opportunities, education and health would create a sense of security among the displacement-affected persons. Therefore, this would mitigate their anxieties and help them rebuild their life in a new place.

IV. CONCLUSION

Lack of acceptance in host communities and social networks fear and uncertainty of not being able to return home, infrastructural deficits, lack of economic opportunities and human rights abuses are the major heads that lay the ground for the predictive modelling. This research paper explores the untapped areas of conflict-induced displacement in West Africa and would act like a potential opportunity for policy-makers, governments and international organizations when it comes to narrowing down on the condition of IDPs as well as refugees who fall prey to conflict-induced forced displacement in West Africa.

Failing to put an end to displacement can result in increased and continued vulnerabilities and can ,in turn, negatively impact hosting communities leading to serious economic, political and security implications. As a result, it is imperative to come up with durable solutions for refugees and IDPs who fall prey to conflict-induced forced displacement. Durable solutions work towards the creation of a conducive environment for the displaced as well as the host communities.

Displaced communities ,in most situations, are compelled to relocate to other communities for safety, and resettlement owing to the inevitable loss of their livelihood, settlement, properties

---

[38]Babar Baloch, *Violence in Burkina Faso Forces Malian Refugees to Return Home,* UNHCR (2020), www.unhcr.org/in/news/briefing-notes/violence-burkina-faso-forces-malian-refugees-return-home.

and belongings.[39] This gives rise to a need to multiply the existing services and facilities of the host community on account of the growing need. Especially in cases of protracted displacement, the displaced persons reside in their host communities for a greater part of their lives without any plans to return to their place of origin.[40] As a result, it becomes necessary to offer an environment to the displaced communities which furthers the goals of social inclusion and social cohesion while making sure that such development does not adversely impact the host community.[41] However, presence of migrants is not said to have a backlash on the development and resource availability of low-income countries like West African countries.[42]

Assisting these vulnerable populations is crucial because of the rising anxiety and uncertainty among IDPs and refugees from West Africa. A sense of security would be instilled in the displaced individuals by fostering social cohesiveness across communities, forging strong bonds, and expanding access to economic alternatives, health, and education.

<div align="center">*****</div>

---

[39]Michael M. Cernea, *The risks and reconstruction model for resettling displaced populations,* Social Development in the World Bank, 235–264 (2021) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-57426-0_16.

[40]*IDPs in Protracted Displacement: Is Local Integration a Solution?,* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, (May, 2011), www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201106-IDPs-in-protracted-displacement-Is-local-integration-a-solution-thematic-en.pdf.

[41]Chathuranganee Jayakody, *Approaches to Strengthen the Social Cohesion between Displaced and Host Communities,* Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (Mar. 14 2022), www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/6/3413.

[42] Yang-Yang Zhou, *Inclusive Refugee-Hosting Can Improve Local Development and Prevent Public Backlash, Science Direct* (Feb. 2023), www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000219.