



Public Relations Implications of the Challenges Facing the Bakassi Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria's Cross River State

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Abstract

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), "we are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record" with an unprecedented 68.5 million people forced from home globally (UNHCR, 2018). Among those affected are the Bakassi people in the Cross River State of Nigeria, who were forced to abandon their ancestral home due to the World Court's judgment of 10 October 2002 and Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006 that ceded their oil and natural gas-rich peninsula to Cameroon. This paper aimed at communicating the challenges faced by these people who now live as refugees in their own country as well as assessing the public relations implications of their geographical displacement, social dislocation, and economic dispossession. The study employed the survey method and used the questionnaire to obtain data from 200 internally-displaced persons of Bakassi; as well as unstructured interview to gather additional information from five Government officials and five Bakassi elites who were involved in resettling these people. Egon's refugee theory (1981), Peter's social integration theory (1960) and James Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of public relations (1984) formed the theoretical framework of the study. Data obtained were presented quantitatively, and analysed descriptively. Based on the conclusion that there is a noticeable Public Relations slack in the relationship between Government and the Bakassi IDPs, it was recommended that adequate efforts should be made to fill the observed gaps.

Keywords:

Bakassi, economic dispossession
Integration
Internally-displaced people
Public relations
Social dislocation.

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1. Introduction

On 10 October 2002, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), otherwise called the World Court, had given judgment in Suit ICJ/603 concerning the Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria, with Equatorial Guinea intervening. The ICJ had declared,

In Bakassi, the Court decides that the boundary is delimited by Articles XVIII to XX of the Anglo-German Agreement of 11 March 1913 ... and that sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula lies with Cameroon... [and] requests Nigeria to expeditiously and without condition withdraw its administration and military or police forces from the ... Bakassi Peninsula.... The Court takes note of Cameroon's undertaking, given at the hearings, to "continue to afford protection to Nigerians living in the [Bakassi] peninsula...."

Thereafter, on 12 June 2006, in Greentree, New York, USA, Cameroon and Nigeria signed an agreement, under the auspices of the United Nations, setting the dates and modalities for Nigeria's final withdrawal from the peninsula. On 13 August 2013, the special transitional regime set up to administer the Bakassi Peninsula successfully came to an end.

In article 3 of the Greentree Agreement, Cameroon guarantees to Nigerians living in the peninsula "the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights law and in other relevant provisions of international law." The second part of that section specifically states that:

Cameroon shall:

- (a) Not force Nigerian nationals living in the Bakassi Peninsula to leave the Zone or to change their nationality;
- (b) Respect their culture, language and beliefs;
- (c) Respect their right to continue their agricultural and fishing activities;
- (d) Protect their property and their customary land rights;
- (e) Not levy in any discriminatory manner any taxes and other dues on Nigerian nationals living in the Zone; and
- (f) Take every necessary measure to protect Nigerian nationals living in the Zone from any harassment or harm.

Unfortunately, according to various media reports, Cameroon failed to adhere to the provisions of this agreement. Some instances: Channels Television, on 11 April 2013, reported that 20 Nigerians were allegedly killed and more than 1,000 displaced in multiple attacks by the Cameroonian gendarmes during a forceful eviction of Bakassi indigenes who had chosen to settle in the peninsula. Also, on 7 July 2017, *The Guardian* wrote, "About 97 Nigerians feared killed as Cameroon gendarmes allegedly attacked residents of Bakassi over failure to pay a N100,000 boat levy." As a result of these and other reported attacks, about 2,000 Nigerians (Channels, 2013) abandoned their ancestral homes in Bakassi to take refuge in an Internally-Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps established by the Cross River State Government at Ikot Effiom/Ekpri Obutong and Akwa Ikot Eyo Edem in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. These people thus became part of an unprecedented 68.5 million people forced from home globally, which made the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to declare, "we are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record" (UNHCR, 2018).

2. Statement of the Problem

Arising from the World Court's judgment of 10 October 2002 and the Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006 that ceded the oil and natural gas rich Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, Nigerian citizens in Bakassi, who opted to return to their fatherland had had to abandon their businesses and homes to start life afresh in entirely new and strange locations in Nigeria, with more than 4,000 of them sheltered in a makeshift Internally-Displaced Persons' Camp at Akwa Ikot Eyo Edem in Akpabuyo LGA of Cross River State. Those that chose to remain in the peninsula began to face hostilities from Cameroon gendarmes who reportedly harassed, attacked and maimed them in violation of the Greentree Agreement's provisions. Thus, the people have lived for the past 10 years as refugees in their own country!

This paper aims, therefore, at communicating the challenges faced by these internally displaced people from the Bakassi Peninsula; identifying what efforts the Government has made to alleviate their suffering; as well as assessing the Public Relations implications of their geographical displacement, social dislocation, and economic dispossession.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

- (i) What are the environmental challenges facing the Bakassi people as a result of their geographical displacement from their ancestral homes?
- (ii) To what extent have the internally-displaced people of Bakassi been affected by their social dislocation?
- (iii) How much have the people of Bakassi been economically dispossessed by their internal displacement?
- (iv) What are the Public Relations implications of these challenges as they relate to the internally-displaced people of Bakassi?

4. Review of Concepts

4.1. *The Bakassi People: From Citizens to Internally-Displaced Persons*

The Bakassi Peninsula, located at the South-Eastern tip of Nigeria, where it pushes southwards into the Gulf of Guinea. It is a low lying region bordered on the West by the estuary of the Cross River, on the North by the Akpa Yafe (also known as Akpa Ikang), on the East by the Rio del Rey, and on the South by the Gulf of Guinea (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1996). Until the eventual ceding of Bakassi to the Republic of Cameroon in 2006, the peninsula used to be a territory under the authority of the Obong of Calabar, the natural ruler of the Efik people in Nigeria. This fact was internationally documented on 8, 9 and 11 September 1884 when the Kings and Chiefs of Efut, Idombi (Bakassi) and Tom Shott (Effiat) in Old Calabar signed the Treaty to come under British Protection, with Mr Edward Hyde Hewett, Consul representing Queen Victoria, in which the following declaration was made:

We, our people and our country are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar. That we cannot therefore make any treaties with a foreign power ... but that any Treaty with the said Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar will be binding on us (Cross River State Government, 1994).

However, despite this and several other documented evidences presented by Nigeria at the International Court of Justice, the judgment of that court concluded that “the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria in Bakassi is delimited by Articles XVIII to XX of the Anglo-German Agreement of 11 March 1913, and that sovereignty over the peninsula lies with Cameroon” (ICJ, 2002).

By this pronouncement of the court, the indigenous people of Bakassi, who until this moment were Nigerian citizens, found themselves in a dilemma – to remain in their ancestral homeland as foreigners in a new country or to join their kith and kin in Nigeria as strangers and tenants! The incessant harassment, torture and even death experienced in the hands of Cameroon gendarmes, despite the provisions of both the ICJ Judgment and the Greentree Agreement, forced these Nigerian citizens to choose the latter option, thus becoming the internally-displaced persons they are today.

4.2. *The Rights of IDPs and Government's Obligations towards their Protection*

To begin this sub-section, the question to answer is, “Who are internally-displaced persons?” The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, otherwise referred to as the Kampala Convention, which was adopted on 23 October 2009, defines internally-displaced persons as:

... persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.

Also, Ene-Okon (2018) gives a simple description of who internally-displaced persons are. She sees them as people who are “within the borders of their country, but are unable to safely live in their own home or region.” As citizens of the country, though they are not in their “homes or places of habitual residence”, these people, as Ene-Okon also observes, do “have rights, which are to be protected and not to be treated as mere charity.”

Although there is no international universal treaty which applies specifically to IDPs, as is the case with refugees, the United Nations, in order to establish a normative framework for their protection, adopted the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in 1998. Structured around the phases of displacement, principles 5 to 9 address protection against displacement, principles 10 to 23 – protection during displacement, principles 24 to 27 provide the framework for humanitarian assistance, while principles 28 to 30 take care of “protection during return, local integration in the locations where the persons have been displaced and resettlement in another part of the country.” Specifically, the principles affirm that “national authorities have the primary responsibility to ensure that IDPs’ basic rights to food, water, shelter, dignity and safety are met in addition to facilitating their access to all other rights” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – IDMC, 2013).

Furthermore, both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966 but which came into force on 3 January 1976, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 1966, provide for some individual rights. These include the rights to life, education, health, adequate standard of living, self-determination, and protection from all forms of violence, abuse and torture (UNHR, 1966a and b).

In Nigeria, Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1999) as amended, provides for the fundamental rights of the citizens, including those who are internally displaced. Between sections 33 and 43 of the Constitution, some rights are enshrined and these include right to life (S.33), right to dignity of human person (S.34), right to personal liberty (S.35), right to fair hearing (S.36), right to private and family life (S.37), and right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Others are right to freedom of expression and the press (S.39), right to peaceful assembly and association (S.40), right to freedom of movement (S.41),

right to freedom from discrimination (S.42), and right to freedom to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria (S.43).

The IDPs, not minding their pathetic circumstances in life which have turned them into strangers in their own country, are covered by these rights. As unequivocally stated in the cited covenants and conventions, the Government, at every level, is obligated to respect, protect and ensure these rights. As stated by Ene-Okon (2018), these include obligation by the State *to respect* which refrains the Government from “interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights” (p.116), obligation *to protect* IDPs against human rights abuse (p.117), and obligation *to fulfil* which expects that Government “must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights” (p.118).

Have the Bakassi IDPs in Cross River State of Nigeria enjoyed these rights? Has Government lived up to its obligations of protecting and ensuring these rights of Bakassi IDPs? If not, what are the challenges facing the displaced people? And what are the Public Relations implications of those challenges?

4.3. PR and Management of the Challenges Facing IDPs

Many authors have defined Public Relations but they have all done so in accordance with their different dispositions. One common definition, by the British Institute of Public Relations (IPR), sees the subject as “the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” (Jefkins, 1998). However, for this study, the definition we will rely on is this by the *Public Relations News*, a weekly newsletter in the industry, which says Public Relations is:

The management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organisation with the public interest, and executes a programme of action (and communication) to earn public understanding and acceptance (Belch and Belch, 2009).

In properly situating Public Relations as management function, Belch and Belch (2009) admonish that the term, management, should not be limited to business but used in the broadest sense that involves all types of organisation, which should include government. Therefore, in trying to assess Public Relations implications of the socio-political, economic and environmental challenges facing the internally-displaced people of Bakassi, it is necessary to ascertain in what way (the procedures) the policies of Government (the organisation) have been used to address the problems (the public interest) in order to earn the IDPs’ (public) understanding and acceptance.

To be properly appreciated as management function, Public Relations is required to determine and evaluate public attitudes. In this wise, it can help the IDPs and other marginalised groups to have a voice and be heard. It can also help in creating awareness of the situation these people are living in so that Government and other policy makers can act in such a way that they can properly be understood and accepted by the public. Besides, Public Relations can ensure that people do not incite others, especially among host community members, against the IDPs. As Jennifer Greer, president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), has said in a press statement, speech that encourages violence has “a silencing effect” on such groups as refugees, which include the IDPs. She goes on to explain, “In the face of the violence surrounding hate speech, victims weigh their need to be protected from being targeted against the need to be heard – and often choose silence” (2018).

Indeed, where the displaced people prefer to keep silent, they shield themselves away from everything that goes on within their new environment. This, therefore, makes the process of their integration into the society rather difficult. However, when Government stands by them and makes the new environment conducive for the IDPs to grow economically, socially and politically, they can easily constitute themselves into a group or a public, as referred to in Public Relations parlance, which can be useful and mutually beneficial to the Government.

5. Theoretical Framework

Egon refugee theory (1981), Paul social integration theory (1960), and James Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model of public relations were used as the theoretical framework for the study.

In his refugee theory, Egon (1981) classifies refugees into three distinct groups: the *majority identified refugees*, who left because of their opposition to political and social events at home areas and whose philosophy is shared by majority of their fellow citizens; the *event-related refugees*, who were forced to leave their homes as a result of active and latent discrimination and violence against them and their interest; and the *self-alienated refugees*, who left because they felt alienated by the policies of that society which they saw as being in sharp contrast with their personal belief of philosophy.

The Bakassi IDPs fit into the second category – the event-related refugees. They were forced to leave their ancestral homes in the Bakassi Peninsula after the ceding of that area to Cameroon and the gendarmes there, as widely reported in the media, began to visit on them great sufferings, discrimination, attacks and even death (Channels, 2013; The Guardian, 2017).

Paul social integration theory (1960) properly fits into this study because social integration is the process that incorporates the newcomers or minorities, which in this case are the Bakassi internally-displaced persons,

into the social structure of the society where they now live. It involves the participation of all the people concerned – both the displaced people and the host communities – in agreeing to achieve and maintain peaceful social relationship so that they can live together and feel as part of the mainstream society, not minding their individual differences.

This theory identifies social integration (that is, assimilating the displaced people into their new home and giving them equal rights as community members), economic integration (which, in the sense being used here, is allowing the displaced people the opportunity to gain access to business opportunities without any discrimination or inhibition), and identity integration (allowing the displaced people to continue living their lives in such a way that cultural identity and other things that distinguish them are not curtailed). The displaced people of Bakassi need all these so that they can be properly integrated into the new society where they now live.

The two-way symmetrical model of Public Relations, as described by James Grunig in his 2008's excellence theory, depicts a public relationship status in which an organisation and its various publics adapt to each other, and portrays a mutual form of communication, that is, a two-way flow of information which is mutually beneficial between them. Its primary focus is to ensure there is effective negotiation that is necessary to foster mutual understanding between an organisation (in this case, the State) and its publics, which include the Bakassi internally-displaced persons.

6. Research Methodology

6.1. Research Design

The research design employed for this study was the survey method. As described by Kerlinger (1986), this type of research studies large population by selecting and studying samples from the population to discover relative incidence, distribution, interrelationships of sociological and psychological variables. This research design was, therefore, seen as relevant here because the study was directed towards determining the nature of the situation affecting the Bakassi IDPs as well as ascertaining the opinion of people at the time of investigation.

6.2. Population of the Study

Following the migration of the people from the Bakassi Peninsula, some of them moved to Akwa Ibom and Rivers States while the majority remained in Cross River State and were settled in the three Ikang wards of Akpabuyo Local Government Area. The area has a population of 44,562, projected and disaggregated using the 1991 census figure of 19,657 calculated at 2.8 percent growth rate (BAK – LEEDS, 2013). This study, however, was limited to the internally-displaced people of Bakassi in Cross River State who, according to records from the Bakassi Resettlement Committee, stands at 13,500.

6.3. Sample Size/Sampling Procedure

A representative sample of the IDPs was required, and the multistage cluster sampling method was, therefore, used to pick the 200 respondents selected for this study. Each of the 10 wards in Bakassi LGA was allocated 20 copies of the questionnaire with every village sampled and compounds, randomly selected. However, since focus was only on the IDPs, and they were not settling in every household, the purposive sampling technique was applied at this level to select the respondents. In addition, five Government officials and five elites of Bakassi origin who were involved in the resettlement of the displaced Bakassi people were interviewed.

6.4. Research Instruments

Questionnaires were used to obtain data from the sampled internally-displaced people of Bakassi. The questions contained therein were close-ended. Unstructured interview, on the other hand, was used to gather additional information from government officials and Bakassi elites.

6.5. Method of Data Collection

Questionnaire was administered personally to the respondents by the researcher and where he could not do so, the service of research assistants was utilised. The one-on-one administration of the instrument was necessary because many of the Bakassi displaced people are not well-educated and the questionnaire items needed to be explained and/or interpreted for them to provide useful responses. This explains why out of 200 copies of questionnaire administered, a total of 198, representing 99 percent, were retrieved. The interviews were also personally conducted; and the discussion was tape recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

6.6. Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained through the questionnaire were presented in tabular form and analysed quantitatively using simple percentage; while the data from the interview were analysed both qualitatively and descriptively.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table-1. Demographic information of respondents.

Sex distribution of respondents						
Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Male	107	54.04	Female	91	45.06	198 (100%)
Age distribution of respondents						
Age Bracket		Frequency		Percentage		
18 years – 34 years		49		24.74		
35 years to 49 years		81		40.91		
50 years to 64 years		41		20.71		
65 years and above		27		13.64		
Total		198		100		
Marital status distribution of respondents						
Marital Status		Frequency		Percentage		
Married		54		27.27		
Single		111		56.06		
Divorced/Widowed		33		16.67		
Total		198		100		

From Table 1, it is clear that male respondents (54.04%) were more than female (45.06%). The strong and active, who are within the age brackets of 35-49 and 18-34 years, jointly constituted an overwhelming 65.65%, followed by 50-64 years (20.71%), and the retirees/elderly who took the rear with 13.64%. Also, more than half of the respondents (56.06%) were single.

Table-2. The occupation of respondents prior to being displaced.

Occupation of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	49	24.74
Fishing	81	40.91
Trading	33	16.67
Civil/Public service	11	5.56
Unemployed	24	12.12
Total	198	100

Before their displacement, 40.91% of Bakassi people were fishermen, 24.74% – that is, those who lived in places like Amboto, Archibong Town, etc. – were farmers, 16.67% – traders, 12.12% – unemployed, and only 5.56% – civil/public servants.

Table-3. Current trade of the internally-displaced people.

Occupation of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	48	24.24
Fishing	32	16.16
Trading	27	13.64
Civil/Public service	31	15.66
Unemployed	60	30.3
Total	198	100

Upon their migration from Bakassi Peninsula, the occupation situation changed. Table 3 shows that the most prevalent group amongst them now were the unemployed (30.3%), while farming (24.24%) replaced the hitherto more popular fishing business, which now fell to 16.16% and civil/public service workers increased by 10.1% (from 5.56% to 15.66%).

Table-4. Respondents' economic situation compared to their pre-displacement era.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	79	39.9
Deteriorated	102	51.51
Unchanged	17	8.59
Total	198	100

As depicted in Table 4, most respondents (51.51%) said their economic situation had deteriorated since they were displaced, 39.9% had recorded some improvement while 8.59% saw their economic power as having not remarkably changed.

Table-5. Respondents' relationship with members of the host community.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cordial	52	26.26
Non-cordial	44	22.22
Somewhat cordial	102	51.52
Total	198	100

Happily, this table shows that 26.26% and 51.52% of respondents (that is, a total of 77.78%) see their relationship with the host community as either cordial or somewhat cordial, while 22.22% say theirs is not cordial.

Table-6. Have you registered as a voter in your new location?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	88.89
No	22	11.11
Total	198	100

Table 6 shows 88.89% of respondents had already registered as voters in their new location while 11.11% were yet to register.

Table-7. Are you a member of any of the registered political parties?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	131	66.16
No	67	33.84
Total	198	100

From Table 7, it is shown that 66.16% of respondents had already integrated by registering as political party members; while 33.84% had not.

Table-8. Do you think you will be voted for if you contest election in your host community?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	101	51.01
No	91	45.96
Don't know	6	3.03
Total	198	100

In the above table, 51.01% affirmed that they would win election where they are now settled, 45.98% doubted they would, and only 3.03% didn't know.

Table-9. Respondents' assessment of the general environment they live in.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Conducive	61	30.81
Fairly conducive	45	22.73
Not conducive	92	46.46
Total	198	100

To 46.46% of the respondents, as shown in Table 9, their new environment was not conducive, to 30.81% of them, it was conducive, and to 22.73% – fairly conducive.

Table-10. Respondents' assessment of their current health condition.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Good	53	26.77
Fairly good	36	18.18
Poor	109	55.05
Total	198	100

This table assesses the health condition available for the displaced people of Bakassi. A total of 55.05% rated it poor, 26.77% saw it as good, and 18.18% as fairly good.

Table-11. Respondents' assessment of educational facility available for them.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate	54	27.27
Fairly adequate	47	23.74
Inadequate	97	48.99
Total	198	100

Table 11 shows how respondents assessed the availability of educational facility in their new place of abode: 48.99% – inadequate, 27.27%–adequate, and 23.74% – fairly adequate.

Table-12. Respondents' assessment of business opportunities available for them.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	48	24.24
Average	51	25.76
Low	99	50.0
Total	198	100

Exactly half of the respondents saw low business opportunities for them in their new environment while for 25.76%, it was average, and 24.24%, there were high hopes.

Table-13. Government v NGOs: which responded more to the challenges facing Bakassi IDPs?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Government	106	53.53
Non-Governmental Organisations	81	40.91
No idea	11	5.56
Total	198	100

As can be seen in Table 13, the responses of NGOs to the socio-political, economic and environmental challenges of the Bakassi IDPs at 40.91% is quite close to that of government, put at 53.53%.

Table-14. Did you make an input into any Government intervention programme for the IDPs?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	8.59
No	181	91.41
Total	198	100

Table 14 shows that almost all the respondents, put at 91.41%, say they did not make any input into Government's intervention programmes meant for them.

Table-15. Are you satisfied with Government's effort at addressing the IDPs' problems?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	10.61
No	160	80.81
No comment	17	8.58
Total	198	100

From Table 15, a whopping 80.81% of the respondents express their dissatisfaction with Government's intervention effort to address the Bakassi IDPs' challenges.

7.1. Brief Analysis of the Interview Conducted

From the unstructured interview conducted with five Government officials and five Bakassi elites who were involved in the resettlement of the Bakassi IDPs, the following aggregated information was gathered:

- *On Government's response to the plight of the Bakassi IDPs:*
 - The Federal Government provided money (one billion Naira, at the first instance) for the resettlement of the people but much of this money was inappropriately applied;
 - The few houses built should have been spread across the new Bakassi LGA instead of concentrating them as a camp in Ikot Effiom/Ekpri Obutong;
 - Supplementary skills, new job creation, more healthcare and educational facilities, as well as empowerment of the youths and women should have been provided for the IDPs to enable them adapt at their new environment.
- *On resettlement of the IDPs:*

- Great efforts had been made by both Government and Non-Governmental Organisations to resettle the displaced people in the former three Iking wards of Akpabuyo LGA;
- The fishermen should have been settled at the coastland while the farmers among the IDPs should have been in the hinterland;
- *On the level of integration of the IDPs:*
 - There is a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the IDPs and host communities as to the rotation of elective offices between the two groups – the riverine Bakassi (IDPs) and hinterland Bakassi (host communities) while the number of councillors was shared equally between them;
 - The Bakassi aborigines who have had very close historical and cultural ties with the Akpabuyo people did not have any difficulty in integrating in their new environment but those IDPs who are indigenes of Akwa Ibom and Rivers States could not blend;
 - While a segment of the Bakassi IDPs is agitating for a new settlement at Dayspring Island, others see such agitation as politically motivated.

8. Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings based on responses obtained from the field is guided by the research questions earlier formulated for this study.

RQ1: What are the environmental challenges facing the Bakassi people as a result of their geographical displacement from their ancestral homes?

In assessing the general environment they live in, 46.46 percent of respondents see it as being not conducive while 30.81 percent say otherwise. On health condition, more than half – 55.05 percent – say it is poor, while the story is slightly better in the availability of educational facilities, which 48.99 percent recorded as being inadequate.

The above scenario paints a picture of inadequate provision of basic facilities such as water, sanitation, electricity, health facilities, and schools for use by the IDPs. This fact was even confirmed by the Cross River State Government in its Socio-Economic Survey (2008) and Survey of Unemployed Persons (2010) when it declared, “Basic life support facilities are poor, [thus] lowering living standards” and that there are “insufficient social security products” which made access to health and education to be inhibited “by long travel time and poor quality of services” (BAK-LEEDS 2, 2013). It was also reported that a mother of three, Mrs Eno Asuquo Etim, died during childbirth at the Bakassi IDP Camp due to “poor healthcare facilities and lack of transportation” (Umoeffah, 2018).

RQ2: To what extent have the internally-displaced people of Bakassi been affected by their social dislocation?

Answering this second research question would help to ascertain the extent to which the Bakassi IDPs have integrated into their new environment. From their responses, 51.52 percent see the relationship with their “hosts” as somewhat cordial, 26.26 percent as cordial while 22.22 percent as not cordial (Table 5). Also, 88.89 percent of them have registered as voters in their new location (Table 6) while 66.16 percent have become members of registered political parties (Table 7). Besides, 51.01 percent of respondents were confident of victory if they were to contest election where they have relocated to (Table 8). This is a reflection of the high level of their integration into the society. As noted by some interviewees, there is an agreed rotation of elective offices (Chairman of Local Government and Member, House of Assembly) between the IDPs and the locals; while even, councillorship positions are equally shared among the two parties. All this is a clear indication that the process of social integration of Bakassi IDPs into the society has, to a large extent, been successful. The level of success recorded here may have been because the Bakassi aborigines, as opined by some interviewees, had had very close historical and cultural ties with the Akpabuyo people and, therefore, did not find it difficult to integrate in their new environment.

Attaining a socially integrated society is very important and beneficial to both the IDPs and the natives. In a study by Brañas-Garza et al, (2010) it was found that people who were more socially integrated tended to demonstrate more altruistic behaviours. Also, according to another study, it was revealed that immigrants, as represented here by the Bakassi IDPs, could introduce cultural diversity that can benefit their host communities by fostering greater creativity and economic growth (Putnam, 2009). In addition, it is an established fact that where social integration has been achieved, there is a high tendency for the promotion of community cohesion.

RQ3: How much have the people of Bakassi been economically dispossessed by their internal displacement?

From the data obtained, it was very obvious that there were serious dislocations in the lifestyles of the people arising from their internal displacement. Comparing Tables 2 and 3, it can be seen that there was an increased incidence of unemployment from 12.12 percent to 30.3 percent since the people moved out of the peninsula. This, unfortunately, led to growing militarisation of the youths whose activities disrupted economic growth and productivity in the area. Also, there was a great decline in fishing activities from 40.91 percent to 16.16 percent; a minimal drop in trading from 16.67 percent to 13.64 percent; while engagement in farming remained in the region of 24 percent. However, in the area of civil/public service engagement, there was an increase from 5.56 percent to 15.66 percent.

A total of 51.51 percent of the respondents, as seen in [Table 4](#), agreed that their economic situation had deteriorated as compared to what they had before their migration to the new location while 39.9 percent saw some kind of improvement. As regards the availability of new business opportunities for them, 50 percent of respondents said these were low while the remaining half of responses were – 24.24 percent “high” and 25.76 percent “fairly high.”

The implication of all this is that the people’s economic capacity became stunted and their productivity greatly declined. Many of them totally lost their means of livelihood while others were forced to adopt a completely new trade as a result of inaccessibility to the source of their former business engagements.

RQ4: What are the Public Relations implications of these challenges as they relate to the internally-displaced people of Bakassi?

To answer this research question, data from [Tables 13, 14 and 15](#) were used. Even though 53.53 percent of respondents agreed that Government’s response to the challenges facing them was greater than that of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 80.81 percent of them were not satisfied with the Government’s intervention effort. This should be because, as seen in the responses by the interviewees, many of the programmes put together by Government did not adequately meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

On their contributions to the formulation and execution of Government’s intervention programmes to address the identified challenges facing them, 91.41 percent of respondents said they were not involved. This is in spite of the IPR’s definition of Public Relations ([Jefkins, 1998](#)), which presupposes that in order to “create mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics”, there is need to create effective communication and encourage members of the publics to voice their opinion on issues that concern them.

9. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, we can conclude that the challenges facing the Bakassi IDPs are enormous, ranging from socio-political to economic and environmental. Even though Government has made adequate contributions towards addressing the challenges, the people are not very satisfied with the interventions because they were not involved and those efforts did not sufficiently meet their expectations. This, therefore, confirms a Public Relations slack in the relationship between Government and the displaced people of Bakassi which needs to be straightened.

10. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion reached by the researcher in this study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. That Government should provide a holistic and integrated resettlement and rehabilitation programme for the Bakassi IDPs. Already, there is a bill before the House of Representatives on the establishment of the “Bakassi Development and Integration Commission.” Action on this should be expedited so that these people can be adequately and comfortably accommodated in their fatherland;
2. That since communication is a salient ingredient in creating mutual relationship, Government should ensure that sufficient information is disseminated at regular intervals to the IDPs so that they can always stay abreast of all activities that relate to their welfare, comfort, progress, survival, safety and existence;
3. And that the Bakassi IDPs should be involved in and their opinion sought on any intervention programme embarked upon by Government for their rehabilitation and sustenance right from the initiation to implementation and commissioning stages. This will guard against wasting scarce resources on projects/programmes that do not satisfactorily meet the needs of their beneficiaries.

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