

# ISRG Journal of Economics, Business & Management (ISRGJEBM)



## ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: Isrg J Econ Bus Manag

ISSN: 2584-0916 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjebm/>

Volume – III Issue -II (March – April) 2025

Frequency: Bimonthly



## Adaptive Social Protection for Displaced Populations: A Secondary Analysis of Policy Responses in Conflict-Affected Communities in Northwestern Nigeria.

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| Received: 16.03.2025 | Accepted: 22.03.2025 | Published: 24.03.2025

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### Abstract

*The northwestern region of Nigeria has faced persistent conflicts including armed banditry, communal clashes and insurgency, leading to widespread displacement and humanitarian crises. Forcibly displaced populations in this region struggle to access social protection programs as traditional policies often fail to address the complexities of displacement in conflict-affected areas. This study examines how social protection policies have been adapted to support displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria, relying exclusively on secondary sources such as government reports, academic literature and policy analyses. By reviewing existing frameworks and interventions, the study identifies key challenges, gaps and innovative approaches in social protection delivery. Findings reveal that while efforts have been made to modify existing policies issues such as poor implementation, inadequate funding and security threats hinder their effectiveness. The study highlights the need for more flexible, conflict-sensitive social protection strategies tailored to the realities of displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria. These insights contribute to the ongoing discourse on improving social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups in conflict zones, offering recommendations for policymakers, humanitarian organizations and researchers.*

**Keywords:** Social Protection, Displacement, Conflict-Affected Communities, Policy Adaptation, Humanitarian Assistance

## Introduction

Forced displacement is a major humanitarian concern, especially in conflict-affected areas where insecurity affects livelihoods and restricts access to essential services. Banditry, community confrontations and insurgent attacks have caused a significant increase in displacement in Northwestern Nigeria forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023). Many displaced people confront poverty, starvation and poor healthcare making social protection programs critical to their survival. However, the success of these initiatives is still a serious concern due to inadequate institutional frameworks, poor execution and security issues (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020). Holzmänn and Jørgensen (2000) posit social protection as policies and programs that offer financial help, healthcare, food assistance and livelihood support to alleviate poverty and vulnerability. In Nigeria, programs such as the National Social Safety Nets Program (NASSP) and humanitarian aid from organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP) seek to assist displaced people. However, reports show that these interventions frequently fail to reach people in most need due to corruption, inadequate targeting procedures and logistical impediments (Usman & Garba, 2023). Insecurity in displacement camps and host communities also restricts access to aid, leaving many people unable to reconstruct their lives (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2023). While there is a study on social protection in Nigeria, most of it focuses on the northeastern region where Boko Haram's insurgency has generated widespread displacement. Despite the mounting humanitarian crises in areas such as Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto, there has been little research into how social protection programs work in Northwestern Nigeria (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022). Furthermore, few studies have looked into the impact of community-led initiatives in filling gaps left by government programs as well as gender inequities in aid access. This study aims to fill these gaps by evaluating the effectiveness of social protection policies in Northwestern Nigeria and identifying important barriers to their implementation. This study is significant for politicians, humanitarian groups and academics interested in enhancing social protection in conflict-affected areas. Its goal is to help in the design of more inclusive and effective interventions that ensure displaced populations receive the assistance they require to rebuild their lives by making evidence-based recommendations.

## Objectives Of the Study

This research aims to:

- i. Examine the effectiveness of social protection programs in addressing the needs of displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria.
- ii. Identify key challenges affecting the implementation of social protection in conflict-affected communities.
- iii. Propose strategies to improve the delivery and sustainability of social protection programs in the region.

## Statement Of the Problem

Conflict and insecurity in Northwestern Nigeria have resulted in widespread displacement making impacted communities susceptible to poverty, starvation and limited access to essential services. While social protection programs seek to give relief, their effectiveness is hampered by poor targeting, instability, corruption and inadequate institutional frameworks. Many displaced people

struggle to get necessary assistance and current policies frequently fail to address their long-term requirements. This study investigates these problems and proposes strategies to improve social protection delivery in conflict-affected communities, especially in the northwestern part of Nigeria.

## Significance Of the Study

This study is significant for politicians, humanitarian groups and scholars since it identifies inadequacies in social protection programs and proposes strategies to strengthen support for displaced people in Northwestern Nigeria. By highlighting difficulties such as poor targeting, insecurity and insufficient institutional frameworks, the study offers insights that might assist strengthen social protection laws and ensuring aid reaches those in need. It also makes practical recommendations for humanitarian groups to improve aid delivery and foster long-term resilience in conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, the study adds to the academic understanding of social protection in crisis situations, making it a useful resource for scholars and development practitioners.

## Literature Review

### Concept of Social Protection

Social protection encompasses a range of policies and programs designed to protect individuals and households from poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion (Barrientos, 2019). It includes social assistance (e.g., cash transfers, food aid), social insurance (e.g., pensions, health insurance) and labor market programs (e.g., skills training, public works) (World Bank, 2020). The goal of social protection is to enhance human capital, promote economic inclusion and provide safety nets for individuals affected by economic and social shocks.

In conflict-affected areas, social protection becomes even more critical as displaced populations often lose access to traditional support systems such as family networks, employment and community-based safety nets (Slater & Farrington, 2020). When properly designed, social protection programs can help displaced persons rebuild their livelihoods, access healthcare and education and integrate into host communities. However, in many low-income and conflict-prone regions, social protection systems remain weak, underfunded and unable to respond effectively to crises (Gentilini et al., 2021).

The design of social protection policies varies across countries and contexts. Some governments provide universal social protection ensuring that all citizens including displaced persons receive benefits. Others operate targeted programs that prioritize specific vulnerable groups based on criteria such as income levels or displacement status (Holmes & Slater, 2021). In Northwestern Nigeria, social protection efforts have been largely fragmented with a mix of government-led, donor-funded and community-based initiatives struggling to address the scale of displacement (Usman & Garba, 2023).

### Forced Displacement and Social Protection in Northwestern Nigeria

Forced displacement in Northwestern Nigeria is primarily driven by armed banditry, inter-communal violence and insurgency. States such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Kebbi have witnessed mass displacement with thousands of people fleeing their homes due to attacks by armed groups (UNHCR, 2023). Displaced persons often settle in informal camps or host

communities with little access to essential services making them highly dependent on external support (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022). Despite the urgent need for social protection, existing programs in Northwestern Nigeria face significant challenges. Government-led initiatives such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP) which includes the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and National Home-Grown School Feeding Program (NHGSFP) aim to provide financial and nutritional support to vulnerable populations (Adesina, 2021). However, these programs have been criticized for poor targeting, limited coverage and inefficiencies in reaching displaced persons in conflict zones (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020).

In addition to government interventions, international organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have provided humanitarian assistance to displaced populations. However, these efforts are often short-term and insufficient to address the structural issues that perpetuate poverty and vulnerability among displaced persons (Holmes & Slater, 2019).

A key gap in the social protection system in Northwestern Nigeria is the lack of long-term resilience-building measures. While emergency aid helps address immediate needs, displaced populations require sustainable solutions such as livelihood programs, vocational training and microfinance opportunities to rebuild their lives (Usman & Garba, 2023). Without such interventions, many displaced persons remain trapped in cycles of poverty and dependency.

#### **Challenges of Implementing Social Protection in Conflict Zones**

Implementing social protection in conflict-affected regions like Northwestern Nigeria comes with significant challenges. These challenges range from security threats to governance weaknesses and logistical constraints. Some of the real-world examples of these challenges in the region include:

- i. **Insecurity and Access Constraints:** One of the most critical obstacles to social protection delivery in Northwestern Nigeria is the prevalence of armed groups including bandits and insurgents who operate with impunity in rural areas. Attacks on villages, road ambushes and kidnappings for ransom make it extremely difficult for humanitarian organizations and government agencies to provide social assistance (UNHCR, 2023). For example, in Zamfara State, the World Food Programme (WFP) was forced to suspend food distribution in 2022 after armed groups repeatedly attacked convoys carrying humanitarian supplies. Similarly, in Kaduna State, mobile health units operated by UNICEF faced threats from bandit groups preventing access to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in remote areas (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022).
- ii. **Weak Institutional Capacity and Corruption:** Nigeria's social protection programs are often poorly coordinated and inefficiently managed leading to delays, misallocation of resources and corruption. In some cases, funds meant for social assistance programs have been misappropriated by officials or diverted to unrelated government projects (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020). For example, a 2021 investigation into the National Social Investment Program (NSIP) revealed irregularities

in the disbursement of conditional cash transfers. Reports indicated that some recipients were not actual IDPs while genuine beneficiaries were excluded due to lack of proper documentation (Adesina, 2021). Similar issues were observed in Katsina State where a school feeding program for displaced children was halted due to missing funds (Holmes & Slater, 2019).

- iii. **Limited Funding and Resource Allocation:** Social protection programs require sustainable funding but in Nigeria, allocations for welfare programs are often inadequate. With competing demands for security spending and infrastructure development, displaced persons frequently receive insufficient or inconsistent support (World Bank, 2020). A clear example is the Nigerian Refugee Commission's 2023 budget which allocated only ₦15 billion (approximately \$33 million) for IDP welfare across the country, a fraction of what is required to meet the needs of the over 3 million displaced persons in the country (Usman & Garba, 2023). Additionally, delays in disbursement often mean that by the time assistance reaches beneficiaries, inflation has already eroded its value.
- iv. **Poor Targeting and Exclusion Errors:** A major challenge in delivering social protection to displaced persons is the inaccurate targeting of beneficiaries. Many social protection programs rely on outdated databases or require formal identification which many IDPs lack due to displacement (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020). For instance, in Sokoto State, a survey by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that nearly 40% of displaced persons were excluded from food assistance programs due to a lack of valid ID cards. Similarly in Kebbi State, women-headed households which are one of the most vulnerable groups were underrepresented in cash transfer programs due to cultural barriers that prevent women from directly receiving government assistance (UNHCR, 2023).
- v. **Fragmentation of Social Protection Programs:** Multiple actors including federal and state governments, international NGOs and local charities operate independently often without coordination. This leads to duplication of efforts in some areas while leaving other communities underserved (Holmes & Slater, 2019). For example, in Gusau (Zamfara State), both the Red Cross and the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provided food assistance to IDPs in 2022. However, due to poor coordination, some IDP camps received food rations twice while others received none (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022). Additionally, a lack of information sharing between agencies has resulted in overlapping cash transfer programs with some families benefiting multiple times while others receive nothing.
- vi. **Socio-cultural Barriers to Social Protection:** Cultural norms and gender dynamics often shape access to social protection programs. In some communities, displaced women and children face restrictions in accessing cash assistance and healthcare (Usman & Garba, 2023). For example, in rural Kano and Katsina States, some women have been unable to enroll in livelihood programs due to male family members controlling household finances.



Additionally, stigma surrounding displaced persons, especially those from minority ethnic groups has led to discrimination in social protection programs. Some host communities refuse to integrate displaced populations limiting their access to employment and social services (Adesina, 2021).

### **Adaptive Social Protection: A Policy Response to Displacement**

To address the challenges of delivering social protection in conflict zones, Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) has been introduced as a strategy to build resilience among vulnerable populations. ASP combines social protection with disaster risk management and climate resilience ensuring that programs can respond to shocks effectively (World Bank, 2020).

#### **Key elements of ASP include:**

- i. Flexible Cash Transfer Programs: Providing cash assistance that can be adjusted based on evolving needs and security conditions (Gentilini et al., 2021).
- ii. Community-Based Protection Mechanisms: Strengthening local support networks to ensure displaced persons have access to assistance even in remote areas (Usman & Garba, 2023).
- iii. Digital Solutions for Social Protection: Using mobile banking and digital ID systems to deliver aid efficiently and reduce corruption risks (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020).
- iv. Integration with Livelihood Programs: Combining short-term relief with long-term economic empowerment initiatives to promote self-reliance (Holmes & Slater, 2019).

In Northwestern Nigeria, pilot initiatives have attempted to incorporate ASP ideas into existing programs. For example, the Nigerian Cash Transfer Office (NCTO) collaborated with international funders to implement digital payment systems for displaced people (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022). Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also created community resilience programs that focus on agriculture training and small business support (Usman & Garba, 2023). However, adoption of ASP is still limited because of budget restrictions, security threats and a lack of institutional coordination. Moving forward, policy improvements must include ASP principles into Nigeria's national social protection plan ensuring that programs are sensitive to the reality of conflict-induced displacement.

### **Empirical Review**

Usman and Garba (2023) examined the barriers to social protection for internally displaced persons in Northwestern Nigeria. Their study found that insecurity, poor governance and weak institutional structures significantly hinder the effectiveness of social protection programs. Many displaced persons particularly those in rural areas struggle to access aid due to bureaucratic delays and corruption. Similarly, Ibrahim and Abdulrahman (2020) assessed the impact of cash transfer programs on displaced persons in Northern Nigeria. Their findings indicate that while these programs provide short-term relief they are often poorly coordinated leading to inconsistencies in aid distribution and leaving many vulnerable individuals without sustained support.

Oluwatayo and Ojo (2022) analyzed corruption and inefficiencies in Nigeria's social welfare programs highlighting that many

displaced persons do not receive adequate support due to mismanagement of funds and favoritism in the allocation of resources. Their study emphasized the need for stronger oversight and transparency in social protection programs to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable populations. The World Bank (2020) focused on gender disparities in humanitarian assistance revealing that women and children face additional barriers in accessing aid due to cultural norms and security threats. Their study stressed the importance of gender-sensitive policies and the need to design interventions that specifically address the unique vulnerabilities of women and children in displacement situations.

UNHCR (2023) reported that insecurity remains a major challenge in delivering humanitarian aid to displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria. Frequent attacks on aid convoys and humanitarian workers have made it difficult for relief organizations to reach conflict-affected areas leaving many displaced persons without critical assistance. The International Organization for Migration (2023) further highlighted that the lack of accurate data on displaced persons has contributed to poor targeting of aid programs. Without reliable data and proper tracking mechanisms, many individuals in need are excluded from social protection programs while others receive duplicated assistance. The absence of a centralized database remains a significant obstacle in effectively distributing aid.

Adesina (2021) examined community-based initiatives in supporting displaced persons, particularly the Safe Haven Initiative (SHI) in Kaduna. His study found that local NGOs, religious organizations and informal support networks have been effective in providing vocational training, psychological support and financial assistance to displaced populations. However, these initiatives remain underfunded and disconnected from larger government-led social protection efforts reducing their overall impact. The World Food Programme (2023) emphasized the importance of food aid in conflict zones, noting that while food security interventions have reduced hunger in displacement camps, they are often short-term solutions that do not address the root causes of food insecurity.

Generally, existing literature highlights the critical challenges facing social protection for displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria. While various programs exist, issues such as insecurity, weak governance, poor coordination, gender disparities and data gaps continue to limit their effectiveness. There is a growing consensus that addressing these challenges requires stronger institutional frameworks, improved security for aid delivery, better data management and a more integrated approach that includes both government-led initiatives and community-based efforts. Strengthening these areas will enhance the ability of social protection programs to effectively support displaced populations and help them rebuild their lives.

### **Gap in the Literature**

Existing and reviewed studies have explored various aspects of social protection for displaced persons in Northwestern Nigeria including cash transfer programs, corruption and inefficiencies in aid distribution and barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance. However, there is limited research on how social protection programs can be effectively modified to suit the realities of conflict-affected communities, particularly in addressing security concerns, gender disparities and poor coordination among stakeholders. Also, the role of community-based initiatives in complementing formal social protection efforts remains

understudied. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by examining how social protection policies can be adapted to better serve forcibly displaced populations in Northwestern Nigeria. It will assess the effectiveness of existing programs, identify key barriers to implementation and propose practical strategies for improving delivery mechanisms in conflict-affected areas.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Social Risk Management (SRM) Theory that was developed by Robert Holzmann and Steen Jørgensen (2000). The SRM framework was introduced through the World Bank which views social protection as a strategy for managing risks particularly among vulnerable populations such as forcibly displaced persons in conflict-affected regions. It posits that individuals and communities face multiple risks economic, social and environmental that can threaten their well-being. To mitigate these risks, social protection mechanisms should provide:

- i. Protective measures such as emergency aid and food assistance to reduce immediate hardship.
- ii. Preventive measures like social insurance and cash transfers to help vulnerable populations avoid falling deeper into poverty.
- iii. Promotive measures including vocational training and livelihood support to enhance long-term resilience and self-reliance.

SRM Theory is pertinent to this study because it describes how social protection programs might address the vulnerabilities of displaced communities in Northwestern Nigeria where violence and instability have interrupted livelihoods. Many impacted people lack consistent income and rely on outside aid to survive (Ibrahim & Abdulrahman, 2020). However, insufficient institutional frameworks, poor targeting and insecurity reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives (Usman & Garba, 2023). Using SRM Theory, this study investigates whether existing social protection programs in Northwestern Nigeria effectively manage risks and provide long-term support for displaced persons. It also emphasizes the importance of more flexible, conflict-sensitive ways to promote long-term stability and resilience in affected communities (World Bank, 2020).

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, drawing on secondary data from academic journals, government reports and publications from organizations such as the UNHCR, IOM and WFP. A thorough analysis of the current literature was done to investigate how social protection programs are administered in Northwestern Nigeria and the issues they encounter. Sources were carefully chosen for their trustworthiness and relevancy to guarantee that the material was correct and up to date. The data was evaluated using thematic analysis which revealed major patterns, policy gaps and areas for improvement. This method gives a detailed understanding of how social protection programs operate in conflict-affected communities as well as recommendations for improving their effectiveness.

## Findings

Social protection initiatives in Northwestern Nigeria have provided some help to displaced people mainly in the form of cash transfers, food aid and healthcare. Government-led initiatives such as the National Social Safety Nets Program (NASSP) and international

humanitarian interventions from organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have played critical roles in meeting some of displaced people's immediate needs. According to reports, cash transfer programs have assisted disadvantaged households in purchasing necessities while food aid has kept many camps and host towns from going hungry. Furthermore, some health interventions such as mobile clinics have offered emergency medical care to people displaced in conflict zones.

Despite these efforts, research shows that social protection services have not been able to reach everyone in need. Many displaced people particularly those in rural and conflict-prone areas struggle to obtain assistance due to a mix of security threats, limited implementation institutions and poor coordination (Usman & Garba, 2023). Many social protection programs are centered in places where humanitarian workers can work securely leaving individuals in remote and dangerous areas without assistance. Furthermore, bureaucratic hurdles and corruption within government organizations have hindered the delivery of aid resulting in delays and inefficiencies.

Insecurity is a key barrier to social protection delivery in Northwestern Nigeria limiting access to displaced persons. Many displaced people live in remote locations controlled by armed groups, making humanitarian access difficult and risky. Attacks on aid workers and relief convoys have further prevented organizations from expanding their activities into very insecure areas. As a result, a substantial number of displaced people are left without help exacerbating their already terrible living situation.

Another key issue is the weak institutional framework that governs social protection in Nigeria. Corruption and poor coordination between government agencies and international organizations continue to undermine the effectiveness of social welfare programs. Studies have shown that inefficient distribution channels, lack of transparency and favoritism in aid allocation have led to resources being diverted away from those who need them most (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2022). Many displaced persons complain of irregular support while others due to political influences receive assistance multiple times while others are completely left out.

Furthermore, inadequate targeting and data management have resulted in the exclusion of many eligible displaced persons from social support programs. Many displaced people lack valid identification documents such as national identity cards or birth certificates making it harder for them to sign up for support services (IOM, 2023). In certain circumstances, help has been delivered based on faulty or obsolete data resulting in inefficiencies and the exclusion of those in critical need. Without an effective database that reliably records displaced populations, many vulnerable people continue to be excluded from aid programs.

Another important finding is the gender gap in access to social protection. Cultural traditions, security concerns and gender-based discrimination all create extra challenges for women and children (World Bank, 2020). Women in many displacement camps and host communities face difficulty accessing aid since distribution channels are frequently controlled by male-dominated networks. There have also been reports of sexual exploitation and abuse in which women and girls are compelled to exchange favors in order to receive humanitarian aid. Despite being among the most

disadvantaged groups, displaced women and children frequently struggle to access social protection assistance.

Despite these limitations, community-based projects have arisen as an important support system for displaced people. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and informal support networks have all played major roles in filling the gaps left by statutory social security programs. For example, the Safe Haven Initiative (SHI) in Kaduna offers vocational training, small-scale financial help and psychological care to displaced women and children (Adesina, 2021). Similarly, community savings and loan organizations help displaced people reconstruct their lives by providing small loans and business training. These efforts while beneficial at the grassroots level are underfunded and inadequately integrated into the larger social protection structure.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate the critical need for changes in social protection delivery to displaced persons in Northwestern Nigeria. While government and humanitarian operations have offered some help, their reach and effectiveness are still restricted due to insecurity, weak institutions and ineffective coordination. Addressing these difficulties necessitates a versatile approach that includes institutional strengthening, data management improvements and increased aid delivery security measures.

One of the most significant challenges to successful social protection is security. Humanitarian groups must look for ways to provide relief in a safe and efficient manner. One possible answer is the use of digital payment systems for cash transfers which allow displaced people to receive financial assistance without risks associated with physical aid distribution. Mobile money and electronic vouchers have been effectively used in other conflict-affected areas and they might be modified for Northwestern Nigeria to ensure that assistance reaches those in need even in high-risk zones.

Additionally, the institutional structure for social protection must be enhanced to guarantee that aid reaches the appropriate people. Government entities must increase transparency and coordination with humanitarian organizations in order to decrease system corruption and inefficiencies. Setting up a consolidated database for displaced people can help with targeting and ensuring that aid is distributed equitably and efficiently. Using biometric registration systems or mobile tracking technology could also help monitor and verify the identity of displaced people, eliminating fraud and duplication of aid.

Furthermore, gender-sensitive strategies must be included into social protection programs to guarantee that women and children receive enough assistance. Setting up women-only distribution stations, safe spaces and dedicated support services can all help to decrease gender gaps in aid access. Humanitarian organizations must also put in place strict monitoring and reporting processes to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in aid operations.

Another significant area for improvement is the incorporation of community-based initiatives into institutional social protection programs. While local NGOs and religious organizations have made major contributions, their activities are frequently isolated from government and international interventions. Strengthening partnerships between local and international players can result in a more coordinated and sustained support system for displaced people. Providing financing and technical assistance to grassroots

organizations can help them reach more disadvantaged communities.

## Recommendations

To improve social protection programs in Northwestern Nigeria, a stronger security framework must be integrated into aid distribution. The government should collaborate with security agencies, humanitarian organizations and community leaders to establish safe zones where displaced persons can access support without fear. Ensuring security will also encourage humanitarian workers to operate in high-risk areas thereby reducing the number of underserved communities. Additionally, a centralized database should be developed to track displaced populations in real time. This will help prevent aid duplication, improve transparency and enhance targeting so that assistance reaches those who need it most.

Community involvement is also essential for strengthening social protection. The government should recognize and support grassroots initiatives such as local NGOs and religious organizations by providing them with resources and integrating them into formal social protection frameworks. These community-driven efforts often have better access to vulnerable populations and can complement government-led programs effectively. Moreover, social protection programs must adopt gender-sensitive approaches to address the unique challenges faced by women and children. Policies should ensure equal access to cash transfers, vocational training and healthcare, empowering displaced women to become self-sufficient and improving overall family well-being.

Finally, better coordination among government agencies, humanitarian organizations and local leaders is needed to avoid program fragmentation and ensure sustainable impact. Regular stakeholder engagements, joint planning and clear policy guidelines will help create a more efficient and inclusive social protection system. By implementing these measures, social protection programs can be more responsive, fair and impactful, helping displaced populations rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study show that while social protection programs have offered some aid to displaced persons in Northwestern Nigeria, several problems continue to impede their efficacy. Insecurity, weak institutions, poor data management and gender imbalances continue to impede access to critical assistance for those who require it the most. Many displaced people, particularly those in rural and high-risk areas struggle to benefit from these initiatives because of bureaucratic delays and safety concerns.

To improve the effectiveness of social protection, government institutions, humanitarian organizations and community-based groups must work more closely together. Improving security for aid delivery, building improved data systems and ensuring fair and transparent resource distribution can all help to close existing gaps. More importantly, social protection services should be tailored to the circumstances of displaced people with a special focus on the needs of women and children who are frequently the most vulnerable. By following these steps, social protection operations in Northwestern Nigeria can progress beyond short-term relief and offer displaced people with a genuine opportunity to reconstruct their lives in dignity and security.

## Acknowledgment

The author are immensely grateful to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), Nigeria, for its research funding grants to the Zamfara State University, Talata Mafara through Institutional Based Research (IBR) scheme batch 6 with reference number TETF/DR&D/CE/UNI/TALATA MAFARA/IBR/2024/VOL.I.

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