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## Insecurity, Displacement And Migration: Implications On Economic Growth And Political Development In Sub-Saharan Africa

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### Abstract

Migration and internally displaced persons (IDPs) flows had become an endemic phenomenon across the globe, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. History had recorded that, the high rate of insecurity such as banditry, kidnapping, terrorism; insurgency, oppressions and disasters both natural and artificial had made people to flee their homelands for personal safety and protection which have caused a lot in the areas of economic and political development. Nigeria as a country within Sub-Saharan Africa was not an exception, because there is constant increase in involuntary displacement and migration in the past decades as a result of security challenges and other disasters which cannot be over emphasized. The largest single cause of displacement, migration and insecurity today in Africa remained armed conflicts added with horrors of genocide based on political and economic and ethno - political cleansing. The influx of African people to more peaceful countries or environments within and outside the continent led by security threats had undoubtedly affected the economic growth and political development of the environments. In view of this, the paper x-rayed the implications of insecurity, displacement and migration on the economic growth and political development within Sub-Saharan Africa. The study recommended that leaders of the sub-Saharan Africa should be proactive in finding lasting solutions to incessant insecurity that caused displacement and migration which impact economic and political development.

**Keywords:** Displacement, Insecurity, Migration, Economic Growth, Political Development

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## Introduction

Insecurity and mass displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa are driven by a complex interplay of factors including armed conflict, political instability, violent extremism in the Sahel, and climate-induced disasters such as droughts and floods. These forces have collectively resulted in millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, overwhelming vulnerable populations and straining resources. Addressing this crisis requires integrated strategies to mitigate conflict drivers, support climate resilience, and strengthen governance to prevent further displacement.

It must be mentioned here that forced population displacement poses a threat to socio-economic development, peace, and stability in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The number of people forced to flee their homes due to conflict, human rights violations, lack of decent rural employment, persecution, food insecurity, natural disasters and climate change has been on the increase worldwide. Report according to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2024) revealed that by 2023, the number of forced displaced persons reached 108 million worldwide with Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for close to 44 million, which represents about 45 percent of all displaced persons. In Southern Africa, the number of displaced people is reported to be at 10.1 million due to climate-induced disasters, economic pressures, and insecurity. In West and Central Africa, violent extremism, political instability, inter-communal clashes over land and other natural resources, and climate change have displaced 12.7 million people.

Burkina Faso's IDP crisis is one of the fastest growing. East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region remain one of the most affected regions with the forced displacement of some 5.2 million refugees and asylum seekers and 12.3 million internally displaced people. The number of forcibly displaced persons has increased over time, especially since 2020 (Tigray conflict; the Mozambique conflict; and drought). While the goal is to encourage displaced persons to return to their places of origin, it is recognized that returnees face various challenges, such as reintegrating into their communities, accessing basic services, finding livelihood opportunities, and rebuilding their lives. The return process is usually complex and challenging, requiring support from both national and international humanitarian organizations to ensure a smooth transition. (Sheu, Soja & Joel 2022).

With the prevailing patterns and dynamics of displacement, achieving the overarching goal of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of “leaving no one behind” by 2030 will require concerted efforts. With the objective of “leaving no one behind”, regarding displaced persons, enhanced coordination and partnership among humanitarian and development actors, as well as with governments, civil society, the private sector and affected persons is critical to ensure responsive, comprehensive, and sustainable solutions.

### **Insecurity in the Sub-Saharan Africa**

The sub-Saharan African’s security landscape is fraught with incidences of terrorist and violent extremist attacks, leadership tussle, inter and intra communal armed conflicts, ethno-religious and transnational organized crimes including narcotics and human trafficking as well as the proliferation of small and light weapons. The addition political instability provides the tipping point for wide scale insecurity across the sub-region. Mali to begin with, is already faced with increased terrorist and violent extremist attacks, ethno-religious violence, inter and intra communal clashes as well as Tuareg separatist insurgencies, especially in the Northern provinces. Recent military coup d’etat that overthrew the constitutionally elected government of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita not only suggests a repeat of the 2012 political crisis in the country but also presents a potential opportunistic expansion and consolidation of violent extremism beyond the North and central regions of the country. This according Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Report (ACLED (2020) has ramifications for national social cohesion and a contagion effect on regional peace and security, especially when weighed against the backdrop of key decisive presidential elections in other countries of the region.

Sheu, Soja & Joel (2022) asserts that, in Mozambique, the Islamist militants or jihadists identified as the Ansar alSuna launched their first attacks in early October, 2017 in the Northern Province of Cabo Delgado, insurgency and conflict has continued to escalate, targeting civilians, public infrastructure and government buildings. Although the Government of Mozambique continues to make concerted efforts to fight and subdue the terrorist insurgency through its national defense forces, the Forca Armadas de Defesa de Mocambique (FADM), a series of battles with the terrorist militants has resulted to widespread violence, insecurity, the death of over 2400 people and the displacement of over 500,000 civilians by

the end of November 2020. It has also disrupted economic activities especially farming, thereby worsening food insecurity.

The insurgency group has engaged in several raids on homes, villages and communities in Cabo Delgado Province, resulting in communities abandoning their homes for security reasons. The majority of people have sought refuge in some parts of Mocimboa da Praia town, other safer parts of the province and in the neighboring provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Zambezia. As of 8 December, 2020, there were 711 violent attacks by the insurgency, according to estimates from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED, 202).

Given the nature of terrorism and insurgency, Hornsby (2013) opines that it is highly probable that numerous attacks in Cabo Delgado go unreported; hence, the ACLED estimates may be an underestimation. Another country bedeviled with insecurity is the Republic of South Sudan the world's newest nation and Africa's 55th country. Renewed conflicts in December 2013 and July 2016 have undermined the development gains achieved since independence and worsened the humanitarian situation. As a consequence, South Sudan remains caught in a web of fragility, economic stagnation, and instability a decade after independence. Poverty is ubiquitous and is being reinforced by ongoing inter-communal conflicts, displacement, and external shocks. South Sudan remains in a serious humanitarian crisis due to the cumulative effects of years of conflict which worked to destroy people's livelihood. Extreme levels of acute food insecurity persist across the country and nearly more than 7.2 million (about half of the population) are facing crisis-level food insecurity, with 1.4 million children under 5 years expected to be acutely malnourished in 2021. Almost 4 million people remain displaced by the humanitarian crisis, with nearly 1.6 million people displaced internally and some 2.2 million refugees in six neighboring countries. Women and children continue to be the most affected (South Sudan Economic Update, 2022).

Kenya has also frequently been in the news in recent years because of deadly attacks within the country by radical Islamist group al-Shabaab. Since Kenya began deploying troops in October 2011 in operation code name Linda Nchi, there has been increase in insecurity in the country. Kenya's security in the postdeployment period has primarily been characterized by a surge in the activities of the Somali Islamic group, al-Shabaab. Following up on its threat to

strike at Kenya if the country does not cease deploying troops in Somalia, al-Shabaab has effectively regionalized its activities, established an active presence in the country and succeeded in carrying out numerous attacks there. Insecurity associated with group has therefore emerged to define Kenya's post deployment security terrain in a way that has affected many aspects of the country's socio-economic and political landscape. (Andrews, 2015).

Insecurity attributed to the activities of jihadist groups is not new in Kenya. Attacks in the 1990s culminated in the 1998 bombing by al-Qaeda of the US embassy in Nairobi, an incident that highlighted the presence of radical Islamists element in Kenya and firmly entrenched their significance as an important insecurity variable in the country. Domestic and international terrorism has since that time, remained an important part of the country's security history. (Hornsby, 2013).

A number of aspects of al-Shabaab's operations in the country introduce new elements of insecurity, among them the frequency, randomness and deadliness of attacks attributed to the group. Another is the fact that Kenyan institutions and civilians have become the prime targets, unlike the situation in the past, when the targets were Western interest in the country. Comparatively, however, al-Shabaab has accounted for only a small proportion -9%- of total fatalities associated with insecurity in the country since it began operating in 2008. The activities of other arm gangs, low-intensity conflicts and state action against civilians, among other factors, have accounted for 91%. Therefore, the considerable insecurity associated with the increase in the activities of al-Shabaab and other radical groups, remain the major threat to Kenya's stability. Successive post-independence political dispensation in the country has grappled with various forms of insecurity. This survey on insecurity in the sub-Saharan Africa will not be complete without looking the challenges in Nigeria, the supposed 'Giant of Africa'. The level of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria both in the northern and southern part has become a major issue for the government. Since 1990 when the activities of the Niger Delta militants started until recent times when Boko Haram insurgents arose in the Northern part of the country, Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented security challenges. These challenges ranges from kidnapping, suicide attacks, bombings, ritual killings, assassinations, armed robbery, and this has led to the destruction of lives and properties, hindered business activities, discouraged local and foreign investors, increases government expenditure on

security, all of these stifles and retards Nigeria's socio-economic development. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Reports, 2024).

Research by Ikenga & Efebeh (2013). Shows that in recent times, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity and terrorism since the advent of the present democratic dispensation. The pattern of insecurity has been regionalized: militia groups in the south, insurgency in the north, kidnapping in the east and south, ritual killings in the east and west, political and nonpolitical calculated assassinations across the nation. The regional pattern of insecurity has given rise to regional security formation in the country in a bid to curtail the alarming rate of insecurity. Boko Haram emerged as a radical fundamentalist Islamic sect, formed by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno state. In 2004, it moved to Kanamma, Yobe state, where it set up a base called Afghanistan.

The sect officially calls itself "Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Liddo' wati Wal Jihad" which means "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad". Other crimes committed by these Islamic sect include; killings, destruction of vehicles; burning of churches, police stations, schools, hospitals, clinics, shops, army barracks and residential houses; adoption of expatriates. The crises in the Niger Delta region which started in the 1990s, arising from the activities of the different militant groups has brought negative implication on economic development in Nigeria. (Nwogwugwu, 2012).

These militant groups include; The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), The Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), among others. These militant groups have carried out deadly and paralyzing attacks on oil and gas facilities, Nigerian Naval officers, oil company staff, killing some and leaving others badly injured. Other criminal activities carried out by the groups are hostage taking/kidnapping, bombing, raping, assassination, among others. Another major insecurity challenge facing Nigeria currently is the activities of the Fulani Herdsmen. Several attacks have been carried out by these herdsmen in all parts of the country, killing people and rendering others homeless.

### **Drivers and Faces of Forced Migration**

The two main faces of forced migration are conflict- and disaster-induced. Movers affected include refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs, development displaces, both environmental and disaster displaces and smuggled and trafficked people; Castles (2004) points out that the majority of forced migrants flee for reasons not recognized by the international refugees regime, many of them displaced within their own countries, and that IDPs are more numerous than refugees. The difficult transition experienced by African countries towards national independence or majority rule sparked conflict-induced migration, which gained prominence over disaster-induced migration in a region most prone to environmental disasters. Understandably, when the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1969, the drivers and faces of forced migration were seen through the lens of colonialism, the focus then inevitably glued to refugees. Little did the OAU member states envision other faces of forced migration, not least internally displaced persons which almost every SSA country has had to contend with then and thenceforth.

As population displacement became more rampant, the OAU/UNHCR Symposium on Refugees and Forced Population Displacements in Africa met in 1994 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the said Convention and made certain salient recommendations, among them that armed conflicts and civil strife were among the root causes of forced migration; that political leadership should embrace inclusive politics for better governance; and that all parties involved in armed conflicts needed to respect the principles and norms of humanitarian law to protect civilians. Indeed, proper handling of the displaced requires thorough knowledge of the triggers of displacement: how dams, airports, roads and urban housing cause development displaces; how desertification, deforestation, land degradation, water pollution or inundation cause environmental and disaster refugees; and how human trafficking and smuggling thrive because of the complementary demand and supply sides and intermediaries in between (Castles, 2004).

To streamline work on IDPs, the former UN Secretary- General Kofi Annan appointed a Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons in the 1990s consequently raising the visibility of IDPs. The representative's work culminated in the development of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Unfortunately, implementation of this handbook has been slow and, like most other UN principles and frameworks, it might take

longer than expected to implement in SSA.

Trafficking within and from SSA reminisces the slave trade of old; it is simply a modern version which, contrary to the past, has captured the whole world. The US Department of State's (2008) "Trafficking in Persons Report 2008" cites the Solidarity Center's three criteria for human trafficking, namely process, means and goal. It provides a diagrammatic definition of human trafficking.

Human trafficking has drawn such attention that various United Nations agencies, the IOM, NGOs, and civil society have been fighting it with whatever means are at their disposal. For example, UNESCO has published several reports on the root causes and civil strife were among the root causes of forced migration; that political leadership should embrace inclusive politics for better governance; and that all parties involved in armed conflicts needed to respect the principles and norms of humanitarian law to protect civilians. Indeed, proper handling of the displaced requires thorough knowledge of the triggers of displacement: how dams, airports, roads and urban housing cause development displaces; how desertification, deforestation, land degradation, water pollution or inundation cause environmental and disaster refugees; and how human trafficking and smuggling thrive because of the complementary demand and supply sides and intermediaries in between (Castles, 2004).

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## **Implications of Insecurity on Economic Growth and Political Development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Africa is currently facing so many security threats, mostly from the rise of radical Islam, increased natural resources, impositions of unpopular policies first from the colonialists and subsequently from African leaders, corruption, unemployment, poverty, terrorism, external influence, inequality and uneven development, to mention but few. These and many other social menace have triggered off a worrisome sense of insecurity that challenge Africa's efforts toward development. It also scares the attraction of foreign investment and their contributions to economic development in Africa. The implications of Insecurity to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be adequately discussed here but below is a summary of the implications. The increasing state of insecurity in the region as a result of the activities of Kidnappers, militants, violent armed robbers and more especially by the some Islamic sects seems to make the African dream or vision unrealistic. In the first place, the increasing state of insecurity presently in sub-Saharan Africa especially by Boko Haram sect, al-Shabaab have culminated into some countries in the region being black listed and given bad image as a terrorist nation by the international community. On 25 December 2009, a Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdumuttallab, attempted to blow up an American airline enroute Amsterdam from Detroit (Olawale, 2020). This botched terrorist attempt strained US-Nigeria relations but was however resolved diplomatically. Nigeria was still included in the list of terrorist nations like Yemen, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan to mention but a few.

Consequently, Nigerians travelling abroad are subjected to serious security scrutiny more than others, and those staying or living abroad are also looked at as security risks.

Secondly, insecurity impinge on the political stability of the region. Thus, when the political system is unstable as a result of crisis, the government in power is distracted from pursuing its goal of transforming the country and moving it to the next level. This is because rather than focus on the agenda of government in power, governments will be compelled to channel all their energy and resources towards security at the expense of other social goods that should be delivered to the people.

Thirdly, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country has dropped. When there is insecurity in the country, foreign investors are scared away from coming to invest their capital and contribute towards economic development. Fourthly, the economy suffers from

stagnation. There is multiplier effect of insecurity on the economy of the country. These include drop in foreign direct investment (FDI), unemployment, poverty, etc. In the Northern part of Nigeria, Newswatch (2012) learnt that a group of investors from Germany, who wanted to build a cement factory in Maiduguri, have withdrawn from the project due to the activities of Boko Haram. The group got the approval of the late President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua's government for the project and had been on it for about four years and had already finished the preliminary phase of the planning including site clearing. Construction work was to begin only to be confronted by an upsurge of violence and bomb explosions.

Similarly, Fifth, most countries in the region have lost both human resources and property worth Billions of dollars to the blasts by different terrorist organizations. In the former, people who should have contributed ideas and proffered solutions to national problems and paid taxes to the government for economic development died due to the blast. The insurgency of sects had led to the senseless killings of hundreds of innocent people. The sects' suicide bombers have unleashed Mayhem on citizens, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan to mention but a few. This affects the population and demand for goods and services that could boost the economy of the region. In the latter, money that should have been used to provide new infrastructure would be channeled back to rebuild those properties destroyed. (Sheu, Soja & Joel 2022).

During conflict, most infrastructure and property is destroyed. Oftentimes, returning populations lack adequate housing, access to livelihoods and get no or limited access to health and education services. For instance, concerns have been voiced about the viability of IDP return programs in Eritrea, and in particular with regard to social infrastructure and services in return areas. According to OCHA (2007), "lack of clean water, food and sustainable livelihoods have threatened the durability of the returns and may have put great strains on the communities". Many international agencies have added their voice to these concerns, urging both state and non-state actors to continue providing emergency and basic social services even after return 'home'. More concerns were further raised regarding the suitability of resettlement projects to support sustainable livelihoods (IDMC, 2009). Cases abound of IDPs who learnt integrative skills, which they could not use upon return e.g. pastoralist communities learning farming skills in IDP settlement camps. This leads to frustration and helplessness after return. With dilapidated infrastructure, not only do IDPs face serious challenges to their social and economic survival, they are also at great risk from a lack of protection for their

physical and material safety. Studies from other parts of the world show a similar trend. Although many people displaced in Iraq looked forward to returning home as soon as the 2003 war ended, this was not to be for many of them they lacked adequate housing, had challenges of poor sanitation and stalled infrastructural development.

Socially, IDPs face negative social labeling from society even after return or resettlement. According to Catherine Brun (2003), locally, internally displaced persons become a social category the meaning of which is modified from the original definition made by humanitarian regime. And this social categorization can lead to unequal access to citizenship rights, including the right to return in safety and dignity as they are seen as internally displaced not as citizens entitled to the same rights and privileges as other citizens of their country). This is despite the fact that the Guiding Principles are clear regarding access to rights for IDPs, Internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced

## Conclusion

Political will and legal frameworks alone are neither the only prerequisite to ensuring sustainable IDP protection nor are they the only preconditions that will ensure that IDPs continue to enjoy their rights after return as other nationals of their countries do. When return is precipitated more by political agendas than a desire to address the plight of IDPs, return programs could just be exercises in futility. For lack of choices the IDPs may remain in places of return or resettlement, at least for some time before another more serious conflict ensues.

While acknowledging that the task of protecting IDPs and providing assistance lies squarely on national governments, this task is admittedly huge and demanding. This notwithstanding, governments must start focusing on IDP protection and support as a national concern not as a burden. Time is ripe to challenge the traditional IDP solutions. This Paper has argued that there is a need to carry out more research and to document voices and experiences of returning IDPs at three main levels: those returning home from exile, those who never return at all, and the self-integrated outside areas of return, settlement or displacement.

It is imperative that we begin to see a trend where IDPs in Africa and elsewhere are being

recognized more as a specific group just like refugees requiring national and international assistance and protection at all stages of displacement. When all is said and done, the need for sustainable peace in Africa cannot be gainsaid! As long as conflicts continue to erupt every other time, coupled with environmental and food emergencies it is hard to conceptualize and implement durable solutions sustainably.

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