

The Role of Oxfam in the Provision of Humanitarian Assistance to Boko Haram Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Adamawa State.

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Abstract

Since 2009, terrorism brought about by the Terrorist group known as Boko Haram has displaced a vast number of persons across the North Eastern part of Nigeria from their places of abode, as they flee the murderous atrocities of the group. Despite the fire-brigade approach of ADSEMA in turning part of the NYSC camp and some schools into five camps across Yola North, Yola South, Girei and Fufure, it could not contain the surging number of IDPs, leading to a huge humanitarian crisis. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 2(b) and 34(1)(a) guarantees the security and welfare of the Nigerian citizen especially against wars and conflict; yet there was no timely and adequate assistance at the peak of the crisis, thereby necessitating the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations. It is against the foregoing that this paper attempts an investigation of the role of Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by Boko Haram in Adamawa State. This paper gave us an in-depth understanding of the role of Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by Boko Haram Insurgency in Adamawa State. Based on the findings, this paper concludes that the role played by Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Adamawa state were significant but not sufficient to meet the needs of the IDPs in the state. Certain recommendations were made, among which is that; it is necessary to ensure sufficient supply of vital medications, particularly for primary healthcare facilities, as well as operational ambulances in areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been officially recorded.

Key Words: Oxfam, Humanitarian Assistance, Boko Haram, IDPs, Adamawa State.

Introduction

The history of internal displacement due to disasters or conflicts is legendary. Some associate it with the big bang and the related continental drift. However, displacement resulting from conflicts, wars, internal strife, etc. resurged towards the end of 1980s and gained international prominence during the 1990s. It is a global phenomenon that throws the displaced persons into a state of helplessness, insecurity and total dependence for material assistance on government and humanitarian agencies. Internal displacement renders the displaced persons vulnerable to violence, rape, labour exploitation, hunger, disease, early marriage, deaths due to prolonged exposure to hostile climatic conditions, among others.

Since 2009, terrorism brought about by the Terrorist group known as Boko Haram has displaced a vast number of persons across the North Eastern part of Nigeria from their places of abode, as they flee the murderous atrocities of the group. Boko Haram has sacked over 25 villages and communities, disrupted large economic systems, disrupted socio-cultural settings, damaged schools, hospitals, churches, mosques, etc. in and across North Eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Noteworthy in this respect is the fact that almost all IDPs flee their places of habitation without preparations for providing their needs as they flee. They have neither little or no cash nor what they can readily convert to cash to meet their immediate basic needs. Thus, as Boko Haram destroyed large number of lives and property in urban and rural communities in the Northern parts of Adamawa state bordering Borno and Yobe states, and also an estimated 1.5 million persons displaced, in a short span of time, government's capacity to respond to the peculiar needs and expectations of internally displaced persons quickly became overwhelmed.

Although insurgency in Northern Nigeria is gradually coming to an end, it displaced a significant number of persons into places considered relatively safer across the country, but particularly other parts of the northeast geo-political zone. In Adamawa State for instance, the State Emergency Management Agency reported that insurgency in Madagali, Michika, Mubi, Maiha, Gombi and Hong Local Government Areas between August to October, 2014 has forced over 700,000 people, mostly women and children to flee their original homes and villages into other places such as Girei, Fufore, Yola, Guyuk, Shelleng, Demsa, Numan, etc. (OCHA, 2014a). The risky circumstances under which people fled their original abodes and places of livelihood resulted in many complications, for instance pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under ten, physically challenged persons, etc. The resultant massive influx into Yola town and its environs by thousands of displaced persons in less than a week, witnessed the occupation of almost all available street corners, open spaces, public schools and uncompleted buildings by internal displaced persons.

However, despite the fire-brigade approach of ADSEMA in turning part of the NYSC camp and some schools into five camps across Yola North, Yola South, Girei and Fufore, it could not contain the surging number of IDPs, leading to a huge humanitarian crisis. Also, despite huge resources spent by the government in providing relief to IDPs, a lot of inadequacies manifested especially in the areas of water, health, food, sanitation, trauma management, education and recreation. The problem caused many IDPs to seek assistance from individuals and some social organizations such as Churches, Mosques, etc. It also triggered the influx of humanitarian agencies into the state. The scenario on the camps raises questions as to whether the humanitarian assistance really gets to the IDPs; why are there such inadequacies? Or what is the cause of the lingering humanitarian crises? Why is it that despite the signs of an impending humanitarian crisis envisaged due to the spate of attacks in most rural settlements of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, the Government was ill prepared

for the humanitarian crisis? The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 2(b) and 34(1)(a) guarantees the security and welfare of the Nigerian citizen especially against wars and conflict; yet there was no timely and adequate assistance at the peak of the crisis, thereby necessitating the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations. It is against the foregoing that this paper attempts an investigation of the role of Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by Boko Haram in Adamawa State.

Conceptual Review

Humanitarian assistance is active in protecting the interests of vulnerable population groups before, during, and after periods of conflict, crises, or natural disasters, and are funded and managed by donations from governments, corporations, individuals, and non-governmental organizations (Kostyak, Shaw, elger & Annaheim, 2017). The primary objective of humanitarian assistance is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur.

Humanitarian assistance encompasses a broader range of activities, including longer-term support for recovery, rehabilitation, and capacity building. Humanitarian assistance is designed to complement and support States in fulfilling their responsibilities to assist and protect populations in need, rather than to undermine or replace those responsibilities (European Commission, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The paper is based on the liberal theory of state, also known as 'liberalism'. As a political and moral philosophy, it revolves around two primary principles: individualism and liberty. Liberalism

prioritizes the individual as the central figure in society and contends that the most valuable social structure is one that revolves around the individual. The fundamental principle is that society exists to enable individuals to achieve their maximum capabilities, and the most effective approach to accomplish this is by granting them maximum freedom. Other parts of liberalism originate from these fundamental concepts (Chau, 2009). Liberalism gained prominence as a valuable political ideology with the US declaration of independence in 1776 and the Masonic uprising in France from 1789 to 1794. It emerged as a leading political notion during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Liberalism has evolved into various iterations throughout history, including classic and revisionist liberalism, new and old political and economic liberalism, as well as perfectionist and minimum liberalism. The aforementioned types of liberalism all possess four common elements: Individualism, Egalitarianism, Universality, and Progressivism.

Individualism, as defined by John Locke (1632-1704), refers to the concept that individuals possess inherent and unalienable rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property. These rights are independent of the state and exist prior to any political considerations. The right in question should be construed as negative, meaning that the state should refrain from interfering with such rights, rather than being positive in the sense that the government should offer benefits in order to gain the loyalty of its inhabitants. Individualism belief that individuals are self- interested and are they know best what their interests are as against government imposed decisions in form of public policy that often leaves individuals worse off. This is based on the belief that human beings are rational thinkers that knows what is best for them.

Egalitarianism is the principle that all individuals are equal and should be treated and given equal opportunity towards self-actualization as well as before the law. Universalism principle implies

that the moral principles that follow liberalism should apply to all individuals regardless of culture, race or location.

Progressivism principle of liberalism suggest an idea of progress that comes by state efficient and effective management of institutions/social organization and resources for the common good of human beings in a manner that promote human living condition towards actualizing his full potentials (Mbachu, 2009:9-13).

Another attribute of liberalism relevant to this study is one that stresses that the state is often associated with bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency in the governance of society and the efficient production of goods and services. It advocates imitated roles for the state in the process of soviet through a reliance on private providers, Non-Governmental groups and other not-for-profit groups in society. It is this tenet of liberalism that is responsible for the wide spread adoption and growing roles of NGOs as agents of development and change in society, especially since the end of the Cold War.

Liberalism has always emphasized the importance of "tolerance" and "pluralism," as well as the restriction of governmental authority and the division of powers. It upholds the values of individual freedom and private property, recognizing the distinctiveness and inviolability of each person. Liberalism also prioritizes individual rights and personal autonomy. Liberalism is a political and economic ideology that is distinguished by specific principles, including:

- i. The principle of ensuring maximal equality of individual rights;
- ii. The principle of allowing the economy to regulate itself naturally;
- iii. The principle of maximising the involvement of the state;

- iv. The principle of minimising the complexity of justice to focus on legal rules.

Research Methodology

The philosophy of this paper is guided by the pragmatic approach. In line with this, the hybrid method of data collection was adopted, which involved the combination of quantitative and qualitative method in carrying out research. The paper relied on both primary and secondary data for sourcing vital information that was used for the study. The primary data were obtained through questionnaire and interview from IDPs, IDPs camp officials and administrators, officials of Oxfam, members of the security agencies, healthcare givers, among others. On the other hand, the secondary data were gathered through the existing literature, which were obtained from relevant textbooks, official reports, journals, newspapers and magazines, periodicals, specialized reports, etc.

Therefore, the proposed sample size for this study consists of 264 persons. However, to cover for damaged or unreturned questionnaire, a total 300 of questionnaire was added. On the other hand, twelve (12) key informants were interviewed.

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Socio-Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

S/No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	119	44
2	Female	154	56
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table indicates that 119(44%) of the respondents are male, while 154(56%) are female.

The result shows that most of the respondents are female.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

S/No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	20-25	29	11
2	26-30	53	20
3	31-35	58	21
4	36-40	61	22
5	41 and above	72	26
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table reveals that 29(11%) of the respondents are between the age of 20-25, 53(20%) are between the age of 26-30, 58(21%) are between the age of 31-35, 61(22%) are between the age

of 36-40, and 72(26%) of the respondents are between the age of 41 and above. From the foregoing, it is obvious that most of the respondents fall between the ages of 41 and above.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

S/No.	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Single	86	32
2	Married	115	42
3	Divorced	11	4
4	Widow	42	15
5	Widower	19	7
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table indicates that 86(32%) of the respondents are single, 115(42%) are married, 11(4%) are divorced, 42(15%) are widows, while 19(7%) of the respondents are widowers. The result shows that majority of the respondents are married.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Ethnic Group

S/No.	Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Margi	47	17
2	Matakam	32	12
3	Dandankwa	25	9
4	Bura	39	14
5	Kilba	41	15

6	Higgi	28	10
7	Others	61	23
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table indicates that 47 (17%) of the respondents Margi, 32 (12%) are Matakam, 25 (9%) are Dandankwa, 39(14%) are Bura, 41(15%) are Kilba, 28(10%) are Higgi, while 61(23%) of the respondents comprise other ethnic groups such as Bachama, Gonda, Mula, Hausa, Fulani, and others.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

S/No.	Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Christianity	152	56
2	Islam	113	41
3	Traditionalist	8	3
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table reveals that 152(56%) of the respondents practices Christianity, 113(41%) practices Islam, while 8(3%) of the respondents practices Traditional religion. This indicates that majority of the respondents are Christians.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

S/No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Farming	62	23

2	Civil Service	48	18
3	Business	65	24
4	Student	53	19
5	Others	45	16
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table shows the occupation of the respondents, with 62(23%) farmers, 48(18%) civil servants, 65(24%) are into business, 53(19%) students, and 45(16%) public servants. The result obtained reveals that majority of the respondents was drawn from the business men and women.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification

S/No.	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Degree/HND	60	22
2	Diploma/NCE	112	41
3	GCE/SSCE	101	37
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table shows that, 60(22%) of the respondents were either Degree or HND holders, 112(41%) of were either Diploma or NCE holders, while 101(37%) of the respondents are GCE/SSCE Certificate holders. The result implies that, majority of the respondents are Diploma/NCE holders.

Table 8: The specific role played by Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Adamawa State

S/No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Protection of civilians from violence, coercion and deprivation	11	4
2	Counselling adults and children affected by crises	22	8
3	Supplying food and water to IDPs	151	56
4	Providing emergency assistance to clinics in the IDPs camps	42	16
5	Promoting human rights, respect for women's rights and gender justice of the IDPs	26	10
6	Supporting local civil society organizations and state bodies	17	6
	Total	269	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

Out of the two hundred and sixty-nine (269) respondents that affirmed that Oxfam has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by the Boko Haram insurgency in Adamawa state, 11(4%) of the respondents holds that this was done through the protection of civilians from violence, coercion and deprivation, 22(8%) said it was done through counselling adults and children affected by crises, 151(56%) said it was done through supply of

food and water to IDPs, 26(10%) said it was done through promoting human rights, respect for women's rights and gender justice of the IDPs, while 17(6%) holds that it was done through supporting local civil society organizations and state bodies.

On the other hand, the people that were interviewed also concurred to the view of the questionnaire respondents. For instance, according to Mr. Alfred Johnson;

On the arrival of the IDPs in Murtala Nyako Housing Estate Kwanan-Waya IDP camp, Oxfam visited the camp and provides relief materials and food items to the IDPs. It is of importance to also note that the assistance did not come only ones but in several times (Interview, 2025).

To further buttress on this, Mrs. Hauwa Usman says, *"I witnessed the provision of relief materials such as blankets, mats among others by the Oxfam to the IDPs in Girei 1 Primary School IDP camp."* Also, Mal. Abdullahi Shehu accounted that, *"Oxfam are counselling the affected adults and children, and also supply food and water to the victims in Daware Village Camp Fufore."* Mrs. Rahila Yusuf said;

Oxfam assisted us in Deeper Life Camp Ground Kwanan-Waya with food items which we relied on for a good period of time. They counseled us, provide water and carry out sanitation activities for us in the camp, which has contributed a lot in making life smooth for us in the camp (Interview, 2025).

In agreement to Mrs. Rahila Yusuf, Mr. Emmanuel Zabedi says that;

We rely on Oxfam for getting good drinking water all the time, and they visit us time to time to ask for our well-being. Also, Oxfam did not only give us food items and cloths, but they also gave us cooking equipment such as pots and plates (Interview, 2025).

Despite the fact the Oxfam carried out its activities as an independent organization, but it does not work in isolation. From his own view, Mal. Zubairu Tanko maintained that;

Oxfam took very good measures by first liaising with the Local Government and then went IDP camps. Even though the staff of the Local Government were not directly involved, but they served as overseers, and through that, they were able to witness the humanitarian assistance that Oxfam provided to the people. Also, Oxfam are really supporting local civil society organizations and state bodies in many ways. For instance, any time that the Government is distributing its own items to the IDPs, the Oxfam were always involved (Interview, 2025).

Mr. Timothy Abasiryu further stated that;

Though we from the Local Government Primary Health Care Department were not directly involved in the Oxfam activities, but Oxfam actually did its best in assisting the IDPs, and also provide emergency assistance to clinics in the IDPs camps (Interview, 2025).

In line with this, Mr. Jafaru Abubakar appreciates the roles played by Oxfam in Yola North, through material and food assistance. He maintained that;

Despite the general assistance to all the IDPs in the camp, Oxfam make sure that its assistance targeted the vulnerable people, including former abductees, orphans, widows, the elderly and the disabled. This has made their activities so unique and we sincerely appreciate the organization (Interview, 2025).

Mr. James Aboki observed that;

Oxfam actually carry out a lot of relief operations. The last of such operations took place three weeks ago. I must commend the Oxfam staff for always taking measures by going round to know that the items are actually given to right people (Interview, 2025).

Miss. Hannah Solomon categorically stated that;

Aside provision of food items and other materials, Oxfam has been promoting human rights, respect for women's rights and gender justice of all the IDPs. Oxfam has been playing a vital role in protecting IDPs from violence, coercion and deprivation (Interview, 2025).

To elaborate on the previous point regarding the advancement of human rights, particularly with regards to the promotion of women's rights and gender equality among internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019 (2013:8) states that Oxfam's vision is to create a fair world without poverty. This entails a world where individuals have the ability to shape decisions that impact their lives, exercise their rights, and fulfil their obligations as equal members of society, where every human being is respected and treated equitably. The Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019 (2013:10) states that Oxfam's primary objective is to facilitate the development of long-term solutions to address the problem of poverty and inequality.

Specifically focusing on Adamawa State, OCHA (2014b:1) reported that the State/National Emergency Management Agency (S/NEMA), Nigerian Red Cross, Oxfam/CISCOPE, IRC, Federation of Muslim Women of Nigeria (FOMWAN), and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) are the primary organisations providing assistance to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the NYSC camp. As of September 27, 2014, Oxfam/CISCOPE has documented a total of 66,792 internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in the host communities of Yola North, Girei, Yola South, Gombi, and Maiha Local Government Areas (LGAs). Oxfam, in collaboration with its implementing partner CISCOPE, takes charge of the WASH committee in the NYSC IDP camp. They regularly organize awareness campaigns on personal and menstrual hygiene, going from one hostel to another. Additionally, it coordinates the efforts of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and

volunteers to eliminate solid waste, sanitize toilets, sweep IDP camps, and clean drainage systems. Oxfam/SCICOPE provided Hygiene kits to 1,000 households, trained 50 volunteers on water pre-filtration, treatment, and time delay before consumption, educated communities on proper hygiene practices, and built 15 VIP latrines in Michka LGA prior to the attack.

From the above analysis, one can now concur that, Oxfam has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by the Boko Haram in Adamawa State in diverse ways and at different occasions.

Table 9: Whether the Oxfam role in the Adamawa State IDP camps is sufficient for the IDPs

S/No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	62	23
2	No	211	77
	Total	273	100.0

Source: Field Survey, June, 2025

The above table indicates that 62(23%) of the respondents agreed that the Oxfam role in the Adamawa State IDP camps is sufficient for the IDPs, 211(77%) of the respondents disagreed and says it was not.

Looking at the conducted interviews, according to Mr. Timothy Abasiryu;

The Oxfam role in the Adamawa State IDP camps is not sufficient for the IDPs, because the organization only try to assist the IDPs, not to be able to satisfy them. Government must also intervene with full responsibility in order to meet up with the need of the IDPs and to also ensure proper protection of lives in all the IDP camps (Interview, 2025).

To Mrs. Rahila Yusuf;

Oxfam purposely came to provide aids to us but not to show that they are capable of meeting all our needs or preventing future crises. It is therefore the responsibility of the Government to provide all our basic need at the IDP camp, protect them and also prevent any form of future crises within the state (Interview, 2025).

To further buttress on the insufficiency of the Oxfam activities, Mr. Mohammed T. Shehu says that;

I lost one of my daughters in the IDP camp two months ago as a result of malnutrition and exposure to unhygienic environment. My family is really traumatized, and is only comforted through the counselling of the Oxfam and the Nigerian Red Cross. If to say the role of Oxfam and other agencies were sufficient, I may not loss my daughter to mere malnutrition and other infections from the unhygienic environment (Interview, 2025).

To Mr. Alfred Johnson, *“Oxfam has done her best for the Internally Displayed Persons, but more helping hands are needed to make life better for the IDPs.* In the same vein Mal. Zubairu Tanko holds that;

Even with the Government assistance, people cannot be one hundred percent satisfied, not to talk of only the role of Oxfam. It would be an irony for us to say that the role of Oxfam alone can be sufficient to the IDPs (Interview, 2025).

However, Miss. Hannah Solomon stated that;

The roles of Oxfam can only partially make life better for the IDPs, but it cannot be sufficient, because every one of the IDPs came from a different background, so there can be no adequate and uniform satisfaction to each of them (Interview, 2025).

To crown up all the interviews, Mr. James Aboki stated that;

Actually the Oxfam activities after a breakdown of law and order, is not measuredly in at preventing crises or providing adequate satisfaction to the victims of crisis, but the measure reason is to provide succour or relief to the people who are suffering (Interview, 2025).

To shed more light on the above analysis, OCHA (2014) maintained that Government and humanitarian partners such as Oxfam expressed concerns over limited supply of treated mosquito nets, Hygiene kits (Sanitary Pads and delivery kits) among both women IDPs in camps and in host communities.

From the above analysis, one can now establish a position that the Oxfam role in the Adamawa State IDP camps is not sufficient for the IDPs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper gave us an in-depth understanding of the role of Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by Boko Haram Insurgency in Adamawa State. Data generated from the field has made it very apparent that Oxfam actually played vital role in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the IDPs by Boko Haram Insurgency in Adamawa State. These roles were played through provision of humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians from violence, coercion and deprivation, counselling for adults and children affected by crises, supply of food and water to IDPs, promoting human rights, respect for women's rights and gender justice of the IDPs, and through supporting local civil society organizations and state bodies. Based on the findings, this paper concludes that the role played by Oxfam in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Adamawa state were significant but not sufficient to meet the needs of the IDPs in the state.

In line with the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Federal, State, and Local Government Authorities should strategize and collaborate with humanitarian actors to facilitate the provision of essential services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) residing in the IDP camps in Adamawa state.
- ii. The National Human Rights Commission Protection Monitoring Project, which currently exists, should be enhanced and given higher priority to monitor the treatment of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the IDP camps located in Adamawa state.
- iii. The Government and other NGOs, including Oxfam, should enhance their efforts to address the immediate requirements of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the camp. These needs include providing food items, water purifiers, water storage containers, mosquito nets, bathing soaps, washing detergents, as well as dignity and delivery kits.
- iv. It is necessary to ensure sufficient supply of vital medications, particularly for primary healthcare facilities, as well as operational ambulances in areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been officially recorded. It is important to provide comprehensive healthcare services, including specialised treatment for individuals with specific health disorders such as HIV and AIDS, as well as prenatal care for expectant women.
- v. Security protocols must be implemented in all IDP camps in Adamawa state to ensure the protection of both the IDPs and NGOs like Oxfam.

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