

CONFLICTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, MIGRATION AND SLUM LIVING IN YENAGOA, NIGERIA**EREBAGHA T. INGIABUNA, Ph.D***Department of Sociology, Niger Delta University*ingiabuna@ndu.edu.ng erebaghaingiabuna@gmail.com**Abstract**

Conflicts has become common phenomena in many of Nigeria societies, including the hitherto peaceful countryside. Such conflicts have forced many to relocate from their natural habitat with many finding solace in the already saturated urban slum enclaves. The paper examined the continued increase in slum settlements in the city of Yenagoa and seeks to provide answers to emergent slum living lifestyle among many residents. Ten identified slum settlements were purposively chosen for the study and a total of 300 questionnaires were administered to respondents. The random and accidental sampling methods were adopted. Data was analyzed using cross tabulation statistical tool for the demographical variables and the mean in Likert-type 4-point scale. The study revealed that many of the urban slum residents were migrants who were compelled to move to the city due to conflicts in their communities which has affected their livelihoods and safety. Being relatively poor, lacking in skills required in urban areas and unable to acquire descent accommodation, many find slums which resemble their rural living abodes and lifestyles readily available. The study recommended identification and classification of conflict-induced slum dwellers as special needing integration and co-existence and not to be camped or threatened of eviction as they only need skills and little allowances that can make them stand on their own.

Keywords: Conflicts, Countryside, Migration and Slum Living**Introduction**

In the past two decades or so Nigeria has witnessed the worst of unrest in its history with several insecurity challenges – intra and inter community or ethnic groups strifes, kidnapping, hostage taking, herders-farmers clashes, militancy, military-communities imbroglio, armed robbery, cultism, and many other forms of insecurity. All these unfriendly conditions propelled many to move from one place to the other for security of lives and better living conditions. Many of the movers tended to direct their destinations towards the cities or towns as they are believed to have enormous opportunities, and safer havens because of the presence of government security apparatus and industries (Crush, 2013; AfDB, 2012).

Migration is a global phenomenon involving people throughout planet earth and remains perhaps the principal factor making small and simple communities to become complex cities or metropolis, though rates of migration and reasons may differ. The developing world has accelerated migration rate compared to the developed nations (Ayuba et al., 2023).

Many migrants from the countryside neither have no specific places in mind nor secure accommodation arrangements yet arrive in the city with hopes to find one. Society was expected to provide a place for their abode and protection. In rural settings where visitors are welcomed almost all times and places, entertained, and get sheltered at least from the vagaries of weather conditions by relatives and non-relatives for days or longer periods, but this is not the same with urbanites who barely build or rent houses to accommodate their immediate families without extra space to shelter possible visitors. This being the case, migrants often direct their search for accommodation to urban

slum enclaves that look more or less like their rural settlements (Akter, 2008). Here marks the prominence of the poorly built urban margins commonly referred to as slums where people generally low in status, poor, and have little or no influence resides (Hammel, 1964; Crisp & Refstie, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts are common in all societies, so also is migration, and slum living, even though these phenomena are much more reported amongst Third World nations by Western media usually from a derogatory perspective. In Nigeria's Bayelsa region, conflicts have taken many forms and dimensions. Being the state predominant in crude oil production in Nigeria, the failure of the state and oil multinationals to provide adequate infrastructure for the oil bearing communities; despite huge revenues/profits accruing to both, the people often visit their grievances on the MNCs because they are seen to represent government interest. These actions often lead to violent conflicts. Conflicts between oil company operators and communities have become too frequent, coupled with the insatiate nature of many community leaders who put forward unrealistic demands. Again, with unemployment and poverty in the midst of plenty has pushed many in the countryside into taking others hostage for ransom, engage in sea piracy, armed robbery, intra- and inter community conflicts, and conflicts between MNCs operators and communities, etc., with consequent arrests and counter-arrests, torture, kidnapping, etc. This situation has exacerbated the rate of rural-urban migration and has made our hitherto peaceful rural communities much more vulnerable than even the urban centres. The result is that many people move to cities.

Literature abounds on rural-urban migration. Works on conflicts in rural and urban areas and slum living exist. However, what appears not covered in much of these literature for which this study hopes to fill the gap, is that no known work exist on the relationship between conflicts in the countryside and accelerated slum living in the city of Yenagoa. This forms the nucleus of this work for which we hope to interrogate and provide answers.

Objectives

Our concern here is to interrogate the relationship between conflicts and insecurity in the countryside and the accelerated growth of slum living in the city of Yenagoa. The specifics are:

- i. To unearth factors responsible for the high rate of conflicts in our rural areas.
- ii. To identify the categories of migrants who move to the city and settle in slum areas.
- iii. To determine the relationship between conflicts in rural areas and slum living in Yenagoa.
- iv. To identify the challenges of slum living in Yenagoa and measures of improving the people's plight.

Research Questions

The following questions shall guide our study concerning the rise in conflicts, migration and slum living in the city of Yenagoa.

- i. What factors spur high rate of conflicts in the once serene and peaceful countryside in Bayelsa State?
- ii. What category of conflict-induced rural-urban migrants settle in slums?
- iii. What relationship exists between conflicts in the countryside and increased slum living in Yenagoa?

- iv. What challenges are peculiar to rural-urban migrants who find solace in slums, and what can be done to ameliorate their often pitiable conditions?

Literature Review

Urbanization spurs rapid growth of cities and towns globally, particularly in developing countries, with resultant negative consequences. Insecurity and conflicts are known drivers of rural-urban migration and a major contributor to food insecurity (Ayuba et al, 2023). The World Bank (2022) estimates that about 4.4 billion people now live in urban centres, and projects that this figure could double by the year 2050. UNDESA (2018) estimates that the trend in urban population growth will be more in Africa and Asia where urban growth rate is expected to be about 90 percent of the projected global urbanization in the next decade. It singled out Nigeria, India and China to account for about 37 percent of the expected world urban population by 2050. Meanwhile, Nigeria's urban population exceeded the rural population by 1.1 percent in 2010 (Kyle & Nijkamp, 2019).

To Get et al. (2007) rural-urban migration has both positive and negative outcomes, serving as primary source of urban workforce and depriving rural individuals of agricultural labour opportunities that impacted on their traditional means of livelihood. Rural-urban migration was beneficial through remittance inflows to rural areas, which enable the purchase of agricultural inputs, food and improved housing (Crush, 2013). The African Development Bank (AfDB, 2012) while alluding to the gains from rural-urban migration, argues that such migrants often end up in the informal sector with low and unstable incomes because of their lack of skills and education, and that rural-urban migration is the major driver of urbanization, rather than new urban births.

Most IDPs are hardly found in displacement camps in host communities, rather in cities as urban centres world over are often desired destinations for millions of IDPs, whether for short, medium or long term stay, despite associated risks of urban violence, insecurity, threats of displacement or tenure insecurity. IDMC suggests that cities should be encouraged to provide IDPs with access to infrastructure, income making opportunities rather than provide camps for such displaced persons (IDMC, n.d).

Crisp and Refstie (2011) noted that conflicts have increasingly led to urbanization in many countries as people fleeing violence often seek refuge in cities, and that over ten million persons, estimated to be twice of total IDPs live in urban areas with many likely to become permanent urban residents. Such people find solace in poorly constructed environments vulnerable to natural hazards like , diseases, etc. and suggested the need for proper planning for poverty reduction strategies, slum upgrading and other community intervention schemes to cater the needs of this category of IDPs.

Alverio, Sowers and Weinthal (2023) noted that despite geographical differences, many countries face similar challenges such as increasing urban population and climate induced disasters and alluded to the findings of other scholars that urban areas bear the burden of climate-induced migration, especially in conflict-ridden countries. They explained that armed conflicts and climate-induced crisis interact in complex ways that undermine human security, resulting in increased trends in rural-urban migration and growth of many informal or peri-urban settlements in many low and medium income countries. In a study of Dhaka, Khan and Kramer (2013) reported that rapid urbanization and a growing number of slums often dominated by immigrants pose many health challenges. They found majority of respondents to be relatively young, female, married and uneducated.

Hammel (1964) captures the scenario surrounding the plight of the poor urban migrants, when he posited that it was not unusual for a peasant to lose his land or employment in the country. Where this happens, his usual recourse is to move to the city in search of livelihood. His poverty and lack of special skills makes it necessary for him to reside and seek employment in the slums. Nevertheless, the most frequent pattern is probably that of the landless peasant seeking refuge in the slum. Therefore, the slum is often the first way station in the urbanization of the rural peasants.

Movement of people from rural hometowns to urban areas intensify the process of urbanization, while the demand for food and the state of food security were influenced by rural migrants who have become a significant part of the urban population (Ayuba et al., 2023). City growth in Africa and Asia in contemporary times takes the form of informal and unplanned settlements. Such informal settlements emerge as natural growth. Accelerated rural-urban migration, could overwhelm the states' capacities and resources to meet housing needs, jobs, informal economies, and infrastructure. The result is the development massive slums where people live under dire conditions, without stable incomes without and to state benefits, recognition and protection. These conditions could create instability, violence and crime, reinforced by city and national governments' negative attitudes towards informal settlements (Kyed, 2017). Kyed argues that the insecurity and crime that prevails in informal settlements is not alone caused by poverty but also by the fact that the city and national governments often treat informal migrants as illegitimate residents with constant threats of eviction and lack of tenure security create high levels of mobility and feelings of insecurity and frustration. These conditions become fertile grounds for turning against the state, involvement in criminal activities, social disputes and lack of social cohesion within the informal settlements.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey design method which enabled us to interview a cross section of urban slum dwellers in Yenagoa using interview schedule. Ten popular slum settlements in Yenagoa was identified and examined, followed by oral interviews with selected slum dwellers and government officials. The interview schedule comprised of demographic and substantive variables. Trained field assistants assisted in the data gathering employing the purposive and accidental methods. The study adopted the Likert type four-point scale in the analysis of substantive variables, using the arithmetical mean. The mean responses were computed on a four-point scale, thus: $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.50$. Mean scores from 2.50 and above were accepted, while those below were rejected. The cross tabulation statistical was used in analyzing the demographic variables.

Study Area

Yenagoa is the capital city of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Bayelsa was a Senatorial District in Rivers State before the 1996 state creation exercise by Gen. Sani Abacha. The name Bayelsa was formed from acronyms for the initial three Local Government Areas - Brass Local Government Area (BALGA), Sagbama Local Government Area (SALGA) and Yenagoa Local Government Area (YELGA). Thus, Bayelsa is coined from the first two letters BA for BALGA, first three letters YEL for YELGA and first two letters SA for SALGA, hence BA-YEL-SA. It is located in the South-South region of Nigeria. In Nigeria crude oil was first discovered in large quantity 1956 at Otagi in Oloibiri district in the present Bayelsa State. Bayelsa is the largest oil producing out of nine oil bearing states in Nigeria but least in size, population and development. It has only eight LGA, even though some of its LGAs may be bigger than some three LGAs combined in parts of Nigeria. A good part of its

territory is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. Paradoxically, it is the least developed – about 70 percent of the State has no access to motorable roads hence river transportation is prominent, absence of functional infrastructure coupled with series of conflicts and disasters. Since many of the rural communities are not accessible by road, when conflicts become unbearable many migrants' first consideration is to move to Yenagoa for safety.

Data Analysis

Table1: Demographic Variables of Slum Residents

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Sex		
	Male	189	68.23
	Female	88	31.77
	Age		
	18-25	47	16.97
	26-35	106	38.27
	36-45	78	28.16
	46 and beyond	46	16.60
	Religion		
	Christian	211	76.17
	Islam	-	0.00
	ATR	31	11.19
	Others	35	12.64
	Education		
	No formal education	41	14.80
	Primary	78	28.16
	Secondary	122	44.04
	Tertiary	36	13.00
	Occupation		
	Unemployed	163	58.84
	Self-employed	57	20.58
	Civil servants	36	13.00
	Students	21	7.58
	Local Government Area (LGA)		
	Nembe	38	13.73
	Brass	46	16.61
	Ogbia	13	4.69
	Southern Ijaw	75	27.08
	Yenagoa	15	5.42
	Kolokuma/Opokuma	10	3.61
	Sagbama	14	5.04
	Ekeremor	55	19.86
	Non-Bayelsans	11	3.97

Table 1 shows that 189 (68.23%) and 88 (31.77%) of our respondents are male and female, respectively. The age brackets of respondents were 18-25 years (47 or 16.97%); 26-35 years (106 or 38.27%); 36-45 (78 or 28.16%), and 46 years and beyond were 46 (16.60%). The religious affiliations were Christians 211 (76.17%), African Traditional Religion, ATR (31 or 11.19%), and others including Echankar, Amorc, Grail Message, Guru Maraji, etc. were 35 (12.64%). None was a Muslim. On educational attainment of respondents, 41 (14.80%) had no formal education, 78 (28.16%) attended primary level education, 122 (44.04%) attained secondary level education, while 36 (13%) went through tertiary education. On their employment status, 163 (58.84%) are said to be not in employment, 57 (20.58%) self-employed, while 36 (13%) are civil servants, and 21 (7.58%) are

students. The study also sought to know the Local Government (LGA) of origin of slum dwelling respondents. Of these, Southern Ijaw (75 or 27.08%), Ekeremor (55 or 19.86%), Brass (46.16%) and Nembe (38 or 13.73%). These LGAs are not only the highest producers of crude oil but are more frequent with reported cases of violent crisis. They are largely riverine in nature, with less than 5% of the areas accessible by road, while Brass LGA has no motorable road at all.

Table 2: Factors that spur high rate of conflicts in the countryside

S/N	Variable	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
1.	Long standing inter and intra community feuds	63	80	72	62	252	2.52	Accepted
2.	Militancy, kidnapping and sea piracy	103	91	40	43	277	2.95	Accepted
3.	Leadership tussles amongst community members	61	76	93	47	277	2.55	Accepted
4.	Attacks by security officials following villagers attacks on oil installations	42	58	103	74	277	2.25	Rejected
5.	Unfair distribution of community wealth/resources	61	43	130	43	377	2.44	Rejected

Table 2 shows that three of the five variables were accepted, while two were rejected. Long standing inter and intra communal feuds, militancy, kidnapping and sea piracy; and leadership tussles amongst community members were factors responsible for increasing rate of conflicts in the countryside, while attacks by security operatives and unfair distribution of community wealth/resources were rejected as causal factors of frequent conflicts in the countryside.

Table 3: Categories of Conflict-induced migrants in slums

S/N	Variable	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
1.	Those whose homes have been destroyed in communal violence/militancy	98	76	55	48	377	2.82	Accepted
2.	Those whose means of livelihood has been adversely affected by conflicts	69	73	63	72	277	2.50	Accepted
3.	Those in search of jobs/skills	81	77	81	38	277	2.73	Accepted
4.	Those who run to the city but could not afford to own or rent property in other parts of the city	73	74	69	61	277	2.57	Accepted
5.	Those whose communities continue to witness violent crisis	71	69	69	68	277	2.52	Accepted
6.	Fishermen and farmers who could neither fish nor farm due to fears of sea pirates and kidnapping	80	72	67	58	277	2.63	Accepted
7.	Kidnappers, sea pirates and oil bunkers hiding from being arrested	32	69	98	78	277	2.20	Rejected

In table 3, all items were accepted except 6. It therefore means that conflict-induced migrants in Yenagoa slums could be categorized into those: (a) whose homes have been destroyed through communal violence or militancy, (b) those who lost their jobs and therefore migrate to the city in

search of jobs and skills, (c) whose livelihood has been adversely affected by conflicts and insecurity, (d) migrants who run to the city for safety but has no wherewithal to own or pay rents in other parts of the city, (e) whose communities have continued to consistently witness violent crisis, and (f) fishermen and farmers who can neither go to the sea to fish nor go to their farms for fears of attacks from sea pirates and kidnappers. It rejected that some migrants in slums were criminals such as sea pirates, kidnappers and oil bunkers hiding from being arrested.

Table 4: Relationship between conflicts in the countryside and slum living

S/N	Variable	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
1.	Slum housing/situation is similar to what obtains in their homes they left behind	101 404	108 324	43 86	25 25	839	3.03	Accepted
2.	Many rural-urban migrants' relatives would not welcome them to their homes	64 256	89 264	86 172	38 38	7.33	2.65	Accepted
3.	Migrants can fix makeshift homes in slums without much ado from city authorities	88 352	93 279	65 130	31 31	792	2.86	Accepted
4.	Slum dwellers' lifestyles and occupations are often similar to those of rural dwellers	72 288	81 243	87 174	37 37	742	2.68	Accepted
5.	Accommodation in slum settlements are often cheaper and more affordable	65 260	92 276	76 152	44 44	732	2.64	Accepted

In Table 4 all variables were accepted. This means that there exist relationship between conflicts in the countryside which pushes people out from the rural areas to find abode in the city. Slum living accelerated in the city because conflict-induced migrants see (a) slum housing/situations as resemblance of what obtains in their villages, (b) relatives of migrants who live in estates and other expensive places would not accept them into their homes but slum dwellers willingly do; (c) the people have opportunity of providing makeshift homes for themselves at a little cost in slums, (d) occupations and lifestyles prominent among the slum dwellers are similar to what obtains in their villages, and accommodation in slums are often cheaper and more affordable. Since conflict-induced migrants from rural Bayelsa are generally poor, they go for what their status and resources can afford, which is living in slums.

Table 5: Challenges of Slum Dwellers and Measures of Ameliorating their Plight

S/N	Variable	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
1.	Slums are often perceived as centres of criminal activities	91 364	93 279	42 84	51 51	778	2.81	Accepted
2.	Slums are often self-created and so lack basic amenities	90 360	113 339	54 108	21 21	828	2.99	Accepted
3.	Slums are suspected places that harbor illegal aliens/criminals	66 264	87 261	70 140	54 54	719	2.60	Accepted
4.	Many slum dwellers are in need of support	105 420	98 294	40 80	34 34	828	2.99	Accepted
5.	Lack of official document, fears of demolition, arrest and surveillance by security agencies	87 348	79 237	78 158	33 33	776	2.80	Accepted
6.	Addressing needs of conflict-induced IDPs should emphasize reintegration	69 276	66 198	88 176	54 54	704	2.54	Accepted

	and co-existence in existing settlements rather than dumping them in camps							
7.	Emphasis should be on skill acquisition and allowances rather than expulsion and suspicion	80	62	80	55			
		320	186	160	55	721	2.60	Accepted
8.	New approaches to dealing with conflict-induced IDPs should be employed	80	62	80	55			
		320	186	160	55	721	2.60	Accepted
9.	Government and NGOs should conduct proper registration to know the actual new arrivals as well as the old IDPs needing assistance	89	102	54	32			
		356	306	108	32	802	2.90	Accepted

Table 5 seek to know the challenges associated with slum living and possible remedies to ameliorate the people's plight. All variables were accepted since they were all within the acceptable mean value of 2.50 and above. This indicates that slum living is unhealthy and uncondusive. Slums are often perceived as centres of criminal activities, believe to harbour aliens and criminals, lacking official documentation, and are places where security operatives often attack, demolish or put on surveillance.

On the other hand, slum dwellers are often in need of assistance from different authorities. Respondents are of the view that conflict-induced migrants should be treated as special persons needing integration and co-existence and should not be forcefully kept in camps. Emphasis should be on their skill acquisition to enable them stand on their own rather than waiting for rations of food or threats of expulsion. The authorities also need special approach in dealing/addressing the needs of conflict-induced slum dwellers as they are different other categories of IDPs.

Discussion of Findings

Our findings reveal that the LGAs where crude oil is largely mined are more violent and have the largest number of conflict-induced IDPs in slums. We can therefore say that the more the activities of oil companies, the more those areas are violent leading to exodus of their people who eventually end up as IDPs in slum settlements in Yenagoa. Long standing feuds, military, kidnapping, and sea piracy, and community leadership tussles are drivers of violent and hence outmigration of their citizens to find safer abodes. Conflict-induced migrants in Yenagoa slum settlements are mostly people who lost their houses to violence, lost source of livelihood hence seeking alternatives, those who arrive at the city but cannot afford decent accommodation, and those whose communities have continued to witness violence.

The study found relationship between slum living and conflicts in the countryside. Slum dwellers were pushed by conflicts in their home environments which bear resemblance with their country homes. They are easily welcomed by existing slum dwellers, and can rent or provide a makeshift apartment overnight at little cost. Lifestyles such as practice of polygyny and engagement in petty jobs, mutual assistance, and working together in groups to improvise amenities for use are activities common in their rural communities.

Conclusion

Slum living is not pleasurable anywhere in the world. People living in slums do so due to circumstances beyond their control. Slum dwellers are regarded as low class citizens, and often

perceived as centres of crime and illegality, lack of basic facilities that could make life descent. Again, many are believed to move into properties without official documentation or regards to safety.

Recommendations

Slum dwellers are citizens, government and NGOs need to address the needs of the people. Conflict-induced slum dwellers would not likely agree to be in IDP camps therefore special care should be taken to address their needs. The needs for integration, co-existence, skills and jobs remain their priorities. These will make them lively happy life once again.

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