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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Health Status of IDPs: An Overview Due to Boko-Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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Dear Editor

Over 12 million people have been displaced throughout Africa due to wars and bloodshed caused by religious and ethnic disputes. Despite the large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa, there is still limited information on their health status (Owoaje et al., 2016). For the past ten years, the Boko Haram insurgency has forced millions of people to flee their homes. In addition, inter-communal clashes such as ethnoreligious conflict and herders-farmers conflict have displaced almost a million people in Nigeria. Internal displacement has significant effects on public health and the well-being of the affected populations. These consequences can be classified as either direct (as a result of violence and injury) or indirect (as a result of increased infectious diseases and hunger) (Lam et al., 2015). Some factors such as overcrowding, poverty, economic and environmental degradation, the inadequacy of safe water, poor sanitation, etc., are

the risk factors that promote infectious diseases (The Sphere Handbook, 2011).

Epidemics of infectious diseases are pretty common in IDP camps due to inadequate water and sanitation facilities combined with overcrowding (Siriwardhana & Wickramage, 2014). According to reports, women and children make up more than seven-tenths of the internally displaced population, and they face various health hazards. These groups are exceptionally vulnerable to physical and mental health problems (Council, 2016). Several studies conducted in IDP camps in Nigeria have reported that women and girls were victims of physical and sexual violence; they are also at higher risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal morbidity, and mortality. The negative impacts of sexual violence are essential and long-term, such as physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and mental health effects. Post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) is the most common mental disorder among internally displaced people. Others include anxiety disorders and panic attacks. According to a UNFPA report from various Nigerian IDP camps, some women and girls were sexually abused. As a result, issues such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies spread throughout the Nigerian camps. Hunger is also another big issue in IDP camps, and women were offered sex in exchange for food. In Maiduguri, over 1000 people contracted cholera, and some have died in an outbreak that started in an IDP camp and spread to nearby areas. Because health facilities have been targeted during this conflict, access to essential services has been limited. More than seven-tenths of the health centers in the impacted areas have been damaged since the war began.

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