

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1



International Journal of Social Work and Development Studies (IJSDS)



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International Journal of Social Work and Development Studies (IJSDS)

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Published by Parakletus Publishing 2025

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Volume 1, Issue 1
Print ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN:3115-6932

Editing by Parakletus Publishing
Cover art by Parakletus Publishing

**POST-CONFLICT RESETTLEMENT IN
NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA: SOCIAL WORKERS' ROLE IN
SAFEGUARDING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of social work training in mitigating resettlement challenges, enhancing safeguarding mechanisms, and promoting psychosocial resilience in post-conflict regions in Nigeria. Relying on extant literature, the study adopts a desk-based qualitative approach to synthesise findings from global and regional case studies, international development reports, and Nigerian scholarship. The analysis is framed by Galtung's theory of peace and structural violence, which explains how displacement reproduces inequality; Coleman's social capital theory, which highlights networks and trust as foundations of recovery; and Sen's capability approach, which stresses the expansion of freedoms through access to education, healthcare, and security. These frameworks collectively guide the interpretation of resettlement as both a humanitarian and developmental process. Findings reveal that displaced populations face systemic deprivation, including inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional support, and exclusion from governance processes. Social work training in trauma-informed care, mediation, and participatory engagement emerges as a crucial factor in bridging humanitarian relief with long-term development, fostering sustainable reintegration. Safeguarding frameworks, particularly those protecting women and children, and psychosocial interventions, such as trauma healing and peace education, are indispensable for resilience-building. Hence, the study proposed a conceptual framework integrating "Risk assessment, training, safeguarding, psychosocial care, participation, monitoring, and institutionalisation collectively strengthen post-conflict resilience, protection, and sustainable community recovery." The study recommends the professionalisation of social work, embedding safeguarding into national resettlement policies, strengthening psychosocial services, and promoting inclusive governance. By situating Nigeria within global post-conflict discourse, the research contributes to theory and practice, offering evidence-based strategies for holistic, community-driven recovery.

Keywords: Post-conflict resettlement, social work training, safeguarding, psychosocial support, community resilience.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Post-conflict resettlement in North-Eastern Nigeria has been severely affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, which emerged in 2002 and escalated into widespread violence from 2009 onwards (Human Rights Watch, 2020). This insurgency has caused massive displacement, economic disruption, and social fragmentation, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Rural communities face unique challenges, including insecurity, limited access to healthcare and education, and food scarcity, compounded by the trauma of violent conflict (World Bank, 2022). The displacement crisis has resulted in the relocation of thousands of individuals to resettlement areas with inadequate infrastructure and limited protection mechanisms. The discourse on post-conflict development is rooted in earlier conceptualisations of rural development and participatory change. Chambers (1983) emphasised the importance of placing marginalised communities at the centre of development practice, while Galtung (1969) introduced the notion of structural violence as a critical barrier to peace and recovery. Freire (1970) similarly argued for the role of consciousness-raising and participatory education in building resilience within oppressed communities. Building on this, Coleman (1988) highlighted the importance of social capital in strengthening human capital and long-term recovery.

Social work has emerged as a vital intervention to support displaced communities, address psychosocial needs, and facilitate reintegration. However, the effectiveness of social workers depends on the adequacy of their training and professional preparation. Targeted training in trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, cultural competence, and psychosocial support equips social workers to navigate the complex dynamics of post-conflict rural communities (Alemu, 2019; Eke & Ajayi, 2020). Moreover, safeguarding frameworks, such as the SAFE model (Safety, Access to healthcare, Family and connection, Education and econom-

ic security), provide a structured approach to protecting vulnerable populations, particularly children and women affected by insurgency (UNICEF, 2019; UNFPA, 2020). Recent studies have demonstrated the importance of grassroots participation in peacebuilding (Adebayo, 2020), the role of education and skills development for youth (Eke & Ajayi, 2020), and gender perspectives in post-conflict contexts (Chika & Musa, 2021). Schou and Haug (2022) further emphasised the relevance of community participation in post-conflict state-building, while Danjuma (2022), Fagbemi (2022), and Edeh (2023) highlighted the enduring role of traditional institutions, participatory governance, and civil society in community peacebuilding across fragile contexts. Reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2021) and the World Bank (2022) stress the need for resilient, inclusive, and sustainable recovery mechanisms to mitigate fragility and promote peace.

This study examines the role of social work training in minimising resettlement challenges in rural communities affected by insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria. Focusing on communities such as Mallam Fatori, Kukawa, Baga, and Shuwari, the research explores the relationship between targeted social work interventions and community reintegration, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods. By employing a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, this study provides a comparative analysis of how different resettlement areas respond to social work interventions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive humanitarian and development efforts, post-conflict resettlement in North-Eastern Nigeria remains fraught with challenges. Displaced populations are resettled in environments with limited infrastructure, inadequate livelihood opportunities, and weak protection systems. Social workers, though critical to addressing trauma, reintegration, and social

cohesion, often lack specialised training tailored to the unique needs of insurgency-affected rural communities. Moreover, safeguarding frameworks remain underutilised, leaving vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, at heightened risk of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Without context-specific, evidence-based approaches, resettlement efforts risk perpetuating cycles of insecurity, marginalisation, and poverty. Thus, the aim of this study is to

The central objectives are:

- To identify primary resettlement challenges faced by rural communities;
- To evaluate the impact of social work training on addressing these challenges; and
- To assess the role of safeguarding and psychosocial support in enhancing community resilience.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several respects. First, it provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social work training in addressing post-conflict resettlement challenges, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Second, it highlights the role of safeguarding and psychosocial support in enhancing resilience, reintegration, and sustainable livelihoods. Third, the study contributes to policy and professional practice by proposing context-specific, evidence-based training modules for social workers operating in insurgency-affected areas. Finally, by situating the Nigerian experience within broader post-conflict development debates (Adebayo, 2020; Schou & Haug, 2022; UNDP, 2021; World Bank, 2022), the research strengthens understanding of how grassroots participation, traditional institutions, and professional interventions can collectively foster recovery in fragile states.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on post-conflict resettlement underscores the multidimensional nature of recovery, encompassing structural transformation, psychosocial healing, and community resilience. Theoretical foundations such as structural violence (Galtung, 1969), participatory development (Chambers, 1983), and social capital (Coleman, 1988) provide analytical lenses for understanding the systemic barriers that undermine recovery in fragile contexts. Recent studies expand this discourse by integrating human development and resilience frameworks, emphasising empowerment, safeguarding, and inclusive participation. Comparative international experiences from Rwanda, Uganda, and Liberia illustrate how grassroots interventions, coupled with professionalised social work, facilitate sustainable reintegration. These insights guide this study's examination of resettlement challenges in North-Eastern Nigeria.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Structural Violence Theory

Johan Galtung's seminal work on structural violence (1969) provides a foundational lens for understanding post-conflict community development. Galtung (1969) argues that peace is not merely the absence of direct violence but the removal of systemic inequalities that prevent individuals from realising their potential. Poverty, displacement, and social exclusion in North-Eastern Nigeria exemplify such structural violence. The Boko Haram insurgency has deepened inequality by destroying livelihoods, restricting education, and weakening governance structures.

Doyle and Sambanis (2020) expand this framework by focusing on how United Nations peace operations can help dismantle these systemic inequalities and facilitate durable peace. They stress that interventions must move beyond ceasefires to address root causes of fragility, including weak institutions, lack of inclusion, and economic marginalisation. Musa (2020)

further contextualises this in Africa by examining the role of natural resources in conflict transformation, highlighting how mismanagement of oil, land, and water resources exacerbates post-conflict instability.

An example is the Lake Chad Basin, where insurgency-related displacement has forced farming and fishing communities to compete for scarce resources. Without inclusive governance, these struggles reproduce cycles of violence. Structural violence theory thus guides the study in interrogating not just immediate security concerns but the structural conditions poverty, exclusion, poor infrastructure that undermine reintegration. For social workers, this implies that interventions must go beyond trauma healing to include advocacy for resource distribution, inclusive policies, and institutional reforms.

This theoretical framework underpins the study by framing resettlement not only as a humanitarian exercise but as a long-term structural transformation. Addressing structural inequalities is essential if resettlement is to contribute to sustainable peace and community resilience.

2.1.2 Participatory Development Theory

Robert Chambers advanced the principle of “putting the last first,” which underscores participatory development as central to effective community recovery (Chambers, 1983). Post-conflict communities, often marginalised and excluded, must be involved in shaping interventions that affect their lives. Freire (1970) similarly advocated participatory education and consciousness-raising as pathways to empowerment. Together, their frameworks stress that recovery must be people-centred rather than imposed from above. Adebayo (2020) situates this in African peacebuilding, arguing that grassroots participation is the bedrock of legitimacy and sustainability in post-conflict recovery. In his view, neglecting local voices fosters alienation and undermines reintegration efforts. Schou and Haug (2022) reinforce this argument, showing

through global South case studies that community participation in state-building enhances ownership, trust, and collective resilience.

Applied to North-Eastern Nigeria, participatory development theory highlights the need to involve displaced persons, traditional leaders, women’s groups, and youth associations in the design and monitoring of resettlement initiatives. For example, community-driven reconstruction projects in Baga have shown higher rates of acceptance and sustainability compared to top-down donor-led projects. Social workers, when trained in participatory methodologies, can facilitate dialogue platforms that empower communities to articulate their priorities from education and healthcare to livelihood opportunities. The significance of this theory is its recognition that sustainable peace cannot be engineered solely through external expertise. Instead, it requires co-production with affected communities. For the study, participatory development theory underscores the importance of tailoring social work training towards facilitation, empowerment, and inclusion, ensuring that interventions are not only responsive but also community-owned.

2.1.3 Social Capital Theory

Coleman (1988) conceptualised social capital as the resources embedded within social relationships that enable individuals to achieve collective goals. Unlike physical or financial capital, social capital emphasises trust, reciprocity, and networks of cooperation. Putnam (1993) extended this, demonstrating how civic traditions and participatory associations strengthen democratic governance and community resilience. Applied to post-conflict resettlement in North-Eastern Nigeria, social capital theory highlights how displaced communities rely on informal networks for survival and recovery. For example, in camps across Borno State, informal women’s savings groups and youth associations often serve as safety nets when formal institutions fail. These networks provide small

loans, food-sharing systems, and mutual protection arrangements. Omotayo (2023) argues that such collective action is indispensable in fragile states, where the state's presence is limited or contested.

The collapse of trust during conflict presents a major challenge to rebuilding social capital. Communities torn apart by insurgency may experience deep divisions based on ethnicity, religion, or perceived collaboration with armed groups. Social workers trained in community engagement can play a vital role in restoring trust, facilitating dialogue between divided groups, and strengthening local associations. One example is the "Community Action for Peace" initiative in Adamawa State, where trained facilitators helped rebuild interfaith committees that mediated disputes over land access. By reactivating pre-conflict networks of cooperation, social cohesion was gradually restored. This illustrates that social capital is not merely an outcome but also a mechanism for peacebuilding.

For this study, social capital theory provides a framework for assessing how training in facilitation, mediation, and safeguarding can enhance the capacity of social workers to rebuild trust and strengthen networks. Ultimately, robust social capital supports sustainable reintegration and reduces the risk of relapse into conflict.

2.1.4 Human Development as Freedom

Sen (1999) redefined development as the expansion of human freedoms rather than mere economic growth. According to Sen, true development occurs when individuals gain the capability to live the lives they value. These capabilities include access to education, healthcare, security, and political participation. This framework is particularly relevant in post-conflict settings, where communities must rebuild not only physical infrastructure but also human dignity and agency. The United Nations Development Programme (2021) applies Sen's framework in its peacebuilding agen-

da, stressing that community development in fragile contexts must prioritise human security, empowerment, and participation. Yusuf (2022) extends this by demonstrating how economic recovery programmes contribute to sustainable peace when they are inclusive, equitable, and rights-based.

In North-Eastern Nigeria, insurgency has stripped communities of basic freedoms: children are unable to attend school, women face gender-based violence, and displaced families lack security of livelihood. A resettlement programme that provides shelter but fails to address education or psychosocial support does not enhance genuine freedom. For instance, returnees in Kukawa reported that while housing was provided, the absence of schools and health services left them vulnerable, perpetuating cycles of dependency. Social work training grounded in Sen's framework would equip practitioners to focus not only on immediate relief but on long-term capability expansion. This includes integrating vocational training for youth, advocating for girls' education, and ensuring access to psychosocial care. By linking relief to empowerment, resettlement efforts become transformative rather than palliative.

Human development as freedom thus provides this study with a normative benchmark: interventions must be evaluated not by inputs delivered but by the extent to which they expand real freedoms for individuals and communities. This theoretical foundation aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and provides a human-centred lens for post-conflict recovery.

2.1.5 Community Resilience Theory

Community resilience theory focuses on the capacity of communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from crises such as conflict and displacement. Akpan and Ogar (2020) frame resilience not only as a coping mechanism but as a pathway to sustainable peace. They argue that rebuilding after conflict re-

quires strengthening both material infrastructure and social cohesion. Menkhaus (2021) extends this by demonstrating that resilience in post-conflict settings is multi-dimensional: it involves governance, livelihood recovery, security, and psychosocial healing. He shows how fragile states can either harness resilience as a tool for recovery or undermine it through exclusionary policies. Brown (2022) adds a psychosocial perspective, emphasising trauma healing as an integral part of social cohesion. Without addressing collective trauma, communities remain vulnerable to cycles of violence. In North-Eastern Nigeria, resilience has been tested repeatedly. Communities in Borno have rebuilt schools using local resources when state support was absent, while women's groups in Adama-wa organised trauma-healing circles that combined traditional storytelling with modern counselling techniques. These grassroots practices embody resilience theory's emphasis on adaptability and innovation. For social workers, resilience theory suggests that training should go beyond individual case management to community-level strategies. This includes facilitating collective action, supporting livelihood cooperatives, and integrating trauma-informed practices into resettlement programmes. An example is a youth-led initiative in Damaturu, where social workers partnered with young people to create vocational centres, reducing the risk of re-recruitment into armed groups. By focusing on resilience, this framework shifts attention from vulnerability to agency. It provides the study with a conceptual tool to analyse how communities can move from survival to recovery, and how trained social workers can act as catalysts in strengthening resilience across social, economic, and psychological dimensions.

This study integrates structural violence, participatory development, social capital, human development as freedom, and community resilience theories. Together, they explain how structural inequalities, lack of participation, weak networks, curtailed freedoms,

and fragile resilience undermine post-conflict recovery. Social work training, grounded in these frameworks, fosters empowerment, inclusivity, and sustainable reintegration.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Post-Conflict Resettlement Challenges

International experiences reveal that post-conflict resettlement is far more than physical relocation; it demands long-term social and economic rebuilding. In Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, survivors faced challenges of insecurity, lack of housing, and food shortages. The government, supported by international partners, adopted community-based Gacaca courts (Gacaca courts were a traditional Rwandan justice system adapted to address the aftermath of the 1994 genocide), and land redistribution policies to address disputes and rebuild trust (Aall, 2020). Similarly, in post-war Sierra Leone, communities grappled with inadequate infrastructure and fractured governance, which stalled reintegration and livelihood restoration (Justino, 2021). Krampe and Swain (2021) further highlight how natural resource dependency in Liberia's rural areas exacerbated conflict recovery challenges, as access to fertile land and timber was contested.

In North-Eastern Nigeria, displaced persons face parallel struggles: insecurity from Boko Haram, inadequate food supply, disrupted education, and strained health systems. For example, Mallam Fatori residents experience renewed attacks due to proximity to insurgent strongholds, while Kukawa has adopted community-led governance structures similar to Rwanda's village-level committees. Lessons from Sierra Leone and Liberia indicate that without inclusive governance and livelihood restoration, resettlement remains fragile. Applied to Nigeria, this means resettlement must go beyond housing provision to include conflict-sensitive governance, livelihood opportunities, and equitable resource access. By adopting Rwanda's grassroots

reconciliation and Sierra Leone's livelihood-centred interventions, Nigeria could strengthen sustainable reintegration in affected communities.

2.2.2 The Role of Social Work Training

Globally, social work training has been central to post-conflict recovery. In Bosnia and Herzegovina after the 1990s conflict, social workers trained in trauma-informed care helped survivors manage post-traumatic stress while also fostering interethnic dialogue (Amadi & Abdullah, 2020). In Uganda, social work training programmes incorporated youth empowerment, equipping practitioners to address the vulnerabilities of ex-child soldiers (Alhassan, 2021). Similarly, in Colombia's peace process, trained social workers facilitated reintegration of former combatants through psychosocial counselling and vocational training, building pathways to sustainable livelihoods (Bello, 2021).

Applied to Nigeria, these examples demonstrate that professional capacity-building for social workers is not optional but essential. In North-Eastern states such as Borno and Adamawa, resettlement efforts often fail due to insufficient professional support. For example, youth in Maiduguri camps risk radicalisation without targeted psychosocial and vocational interventions. Drawing from Uganda and Colombia, Nigeria could adapt social work curricula to include youth empowerment, trauma-informed care, and conflict resolution skills. By empowering social workers to combine community trust-building with vocational programming, displaced persons in areas like Kukawa could transition from dependency on aid to sustainable livelihoods. Such context-specific training would enhance the legitimacy of interventions and reduce the likelihood of relapse into conflict.

2.2.3 Safeguarding Frameworks

Safeguarding frameworks are designed to protect vulnerable populations—especially women, children, the elderly, and minorities—from abuse, neglect, ex-

ploitation, and violence in fragile and post-conflict settings. Internationally, safeguarding has become a cornerstone of humanitarian and development practice, recognised not only as a set of protective measures but also as a pathway to building resilience and empowerment (UNICEF, 2019; UNFPA, 2020). In conflict-affected societies, safeguarding goes beyond immediate physical protection to encompass access to basic rights, inclusive governance, and long-term empowerment of marginalised groups.

In South Sudan, safeguarding frameworks were explicitly integrated into humanitarian response following years of civil conflict. Humanitarian agencies, drawing on the SAFE model (Safety, Access to health care, Family and connection, Education and economic security), prioritised women and girls who faced high risks of gender-based violence in displacement camps. Programmes combined gender-sensitive interventions, such as safe spaces for women, with legal aid services and psychosocial counselling. The outcomes included improved reporting of sexual violence cases and increased participation of women in camp decision-making structures (Chika & Musa, 2021). Importantly, the South Sudan case demonstrates that safeguarding works best when tied to women's leadership and community mobilisation, rather than being left solely to external agencies.

Kosovo provides another instructive case where safeguarding was embedded into reintegration and reconstruction policies. Following the war in the late 1990s, minority groups—particularly Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities—faced systemic exclusion in housing, education, and employment. Post-conflict safeguarding initiatives, supported by international organisations, deliberately prioritised minority inclusion by setting quotas for minority access to education and social services (Lawal & Tukur, 2021). This ensured a level of social cohesion that reduced resentment and strengthened trust in the reintegration process. The Kosovo experience highlights that safe-

guarding must address structural inequalities, not just immediate risks of harm, thereby linking protection with social justice.

In Liberia, women-led initiatives transformed safeguarding from a top-down policy into a grassroots-driven practice. During resettlement, women's groups were trained to monitor, report, and respond to instances of abuse in displacement camps. Beyond protection, these groups lobbied for improved camp infrastructure such as lighting, sanitation, and secure shelters, directly reducing vulnerability to exploitation (Ndubuisi, 2022). Outcomes revealed that when women's leadership was recognised and supported, incidents of gender-based violence dropped significantly, while survivors of abuse were more likely to receive care and justice. This underscores the necessity of situating safeguarding within local cultural and social dynamics.

In Nigeria, however, safeguarding remains one of the weakest links in resettlement and humanitarian policy. Reports from Borno and Adamawa States reveal alarming levels of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and child abuse in displacement camps, often perpetrated by security personnel or aid workers themselves (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Institutional responses are frequently delayed, undermined by corruption, and disconnected from the lived realities of displaced persons. Lessons from South Sudan suggest that Nigeria must integrate gender-sensitive safeguarding into all humanitarian programming, creating safe spaces and legal aid systems while actively involving women's leadership in camp governance. From Kosovo, Nigeria can learn the importance of minority inclusion—for instance, ensuring that ethnic minorities, pastoralist groups, and returnees from Cameroon are equitably represented in camp committees and given equal access to resources. Liberia's example illustrates the potential of empowering Nigerian women's associations and faith-based groups to take ownership of safeguarding mechanisms, cre-

ating culturally legitimate and accountable systems of protection.

Embedding safeguarding into social work training is crucial. Social workers must be trained not only in recognising signs of abuse but also in implementing proactive safeguarding frameworks, engaging in advocacy, and coordinating with community-based structures (Danjuma, 2022; Bello, 2021). Training should incorporate cultural competence, trauma-informed care, and rights-based approaches. Additionally, ICT-based safeguarding tools, such as confidential reporting platforms and mobile helplines, as demonstrated in Uganda and piloted in Nigeria (Kalu, 2023), can complement traditional safeguarding practices by ensuring faster responses and accountability.

Therefore, safeguarding is not merely a protective tool but a foundation for rebuilding trust in fractured societies. By adopting international best practices and adapting them to local contexts, Nigeria can ensure that resettlement programmes are not only protective but also empowering, creating environments where women, children, and minority groups are secure, resilient, and integral to community recovery.

2.2.4 Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial support (PSS) addresses the psychological, emotional, and social well-being of individuals and communities recovering from conflict. While material reconstruction often dominates post-conflict recovery agendas, research shows that without addressing trauma, social cohesion and resilience remain fragile (Brown, 2022; Menkhaus, 2021). Psychosocial support includes counselling, community healing, peace education, and initiatives that rebuild trust and identity.

Rwanda is one of the most significant global case studies in psychosocial recovery. After the 1994 genocide, millions of survivors lived with profound trauma, distrust, and social fragmentation. Post-genocide psychosocial programmes combined formal counsel-

ling with community-driven rituals, storytelling, and commemorative practices (Johnson, 2022). These interventions rebuilt collective identity and facilitated reconciliation, while peace education in schools created new generations less burdened by ethnic divisions (Brown, 2022). The outcomes demonstrated reduced stigma around mental health, increased community cohesion, and gradual trust between divided groups. This case illustrates how blending modern counselling with indigenous cultural practices can create sustainable psychosocial recovery.

Afghanistan offers another example where psychosocial support was integrated into the education system. In conflict-affected regions, children experienced chronic trauma from violence, displacement, and loss of family members. School-based psychosocial interventions provided counselling services, peer support groups, and training for teachers to recognise signs of trauma (Menkhaus, 2021). Outcomes included improved school attendance, better academic performance, and reductions in aggressive behaviours among children. This highlights the importance of mainstreaming psychosocial support into existing community systems, particularly education, rather than isolating it as a stand-alone intervention.

Sri Lanka, recovering from decades of civil war, integrated peace education into psychosocial interventions. Johnson (2022) shows how curricula in post-conflict schools focused on teaching coping mechanisms, conflict resolution, and empathy. This reduced prejudice between ethnic groups, encouraged dialogue, and equipped young people with tools to resist cycles of violence. The long-term outcome was the development of inclusive youth leadership and greater intergroup cooperation in local governance.

In Nigeria, psychosocial needs in insurgency-affected states are acute. Returnees from displacement camps often suffer from PTSD, depression, and anxiety after experiencing violence, abduction, and the destruction

of livelihoods. In Bama and Damaturu, for instance, young people remain vulnerable to radicalisation in the absence of adequate psychosocial care (Alhassan, 2021). Applying lessons from Rwanda, Nigeria could integrate culturally grounded practices such as storytelling, music, and community dialogue alongside professional counselling. From Afghanistan, Nigeria can learn the importance of embedding psychosocial support into school systems, ensuring children receive structured emotional care that enhances resilience. Sri Lanka's model suggests introducing peace education curricula into North-Eastern Nigerian schools, enabling divided communities to rebuild trust across ethnic and religious lines.

Nigerian scholarship reinforces this. Bello (2021) highlights that reintegration of displaced persons is ineffective without addressing trauma and social cohesion. Edeh (2023) emphasises civil society's role in community healing, advocating grassroots-led psychosocial programmes. Omotayo (2023) demonstrates that social capital, when rebuilt through psychosocial support, strengthens community resilience and reduces dependency on humanitarian aid. These insights align with global findings, confirming that psychosocial recovery must be a central pillar of resettlement.

Training social workers in multi-layered psychosocial approaches is essential. Social workers should be equipped to provide individual counselling, facilitate group dialogues, and integrate cultural practices into healing (Akpan & Ogar, 2020; James, 2020). They must also be trained in trauma-informed care, advocacy, and community mobilisation to bridge humanitarian assistance with long-term resilience. Innovative approaches, such as ICT-based mental health platforms, can expand access to support in remote or insecure areas (Kalu, 2023).

Ultimately, psychosocial support transforms resettlement from mere physical relocation into holistic

recovery. By fostering coping strategies, rebuilding trust, and restoring collective identity, psychosocial interventions reduce vulnerability to relapse into conflict and radicalisation. For North-Eastern Nigeria, embedding psychosocial support into social work practice and community recovery programmes is indispensable for sustainable peace.

2.2.5 Comparative Community Analysis

International studies confirm that recovery outcomes vary significantly across post-conflict communities depending on governance and support structures. In Nepal, post-civil war reintegration was more successful in communities with robust local governance and NGO partnerships, while remote areas lagged due to logistical challenges (Paffenholz, 2020). In the Lake Chad Basin, Ibrahim (2021) found that livelihood recovery was stronger in communities closer to water resources, illustrating how geography shapes outcomes. In Northern Uganda, civil society-driven interventions achieved faster reintegration than purely state-led programmes (Edeh, 2023).

In Nigeria, similar variations exist. Maiduguri benefits from sustained NGO presence and donor investment, which has improved resettlement services. In contrast, Bama struggles with weak logistics, making aid delivery inconsistent. Drawing from Nepal, Nigeria must strengthen local governance and ensure that community leaders are engaged in planning. From Lake Chad Basin lessons, resource proximity should guide intervention design — communities with less fertile land need alternative livelihoods. From Northern Uganda's case, Nigerian civil society must be empowered to lead locally grounded initiatives, complementing state efforts. By adopting comparative approaches, Nigeria can avoid one-size-fits-all solutions and tailor interventions to the unique conditions of Mallam Fatori, Kukawa, Bama, and other affected communities.

2.3 Empirical Review

Doyle and Sambanis (2020) examined how United Nations peace operations contribute to rebuilding post-conflict states, highlighting the importance of addressing root causes such as weak institutions and exclusionary governance. Their study provides large-scale comparative evidence that durable peace requires institutional reforms alongside humanitarian interventions. However, their framework primarily focuses on state-level peacebuilding rather than community-level reintegration. This creates a gap in understanding how grassroots mechanisms, particularly social work interventions, can complement state-led peacebuilding in fragile rural communities. For North-Eastern Nigeria, where state institutions remain weak, their macro-level insights are valuable but insufficient. The current study addresses this gap by shifting the focus to micro-level dynamics — how trained social workers and community-led initiatives can enhance resettlement outcomes in insurgency-affected areas. This adds depth to Doyle and Sambanis' conclusions by situating them within lived realities of displaced persons in rural Nigeria.

Justino (2021) conducted micro-level studies on community development in post-conflict settings, demonstrating how displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and weakened social structures affect recovery. His work emphasises the importance of household-level resilience, informal networks, and microeconomic recovery strategies in shaping reintegration. While Justino's study bridges macro and micro perspectives, its scope is largely quantitative, relying heavily on economic indicators. This leaves psychosocial and cultural dimensions of recovery underexplored, particularly how trauma, gender roles, and safeguarding frameworks influence resettlement. For Nigeria, where insurgency has deeply eroded social cohesion, purely economic analyses cannot capture the full spectrum of challenges. The gap here lies in integrating psychosocial support, trauma-informed care, and cultural competence into post-conflict development strategies.

The present study fills this gap by investigating how professional social work training — beyond economic recovery — contributes to building trust, resilience, and social cohesion in rural communities.

Menkhaus (2021) explored community resilience in post-conflict societies, arguing that resilience is multidimensional, spanning governance, security, livelihood recovery, and psychosocial healing. His analysis shows that communities with stronger adaptive capacities recover faster and are less prone to renewed violence. While comprehensive, Menkhaus' study is more descriptive than prescriptive, offering broad frameworks but limited practical insights into how resilience can be systematically strengthened through interventions. Additionally, his research largely overlooks the role of professional social workers, who are central to fostering resilience in fragile communities. For Nigeria, this is a significant gap since displaced populations require both structural reforms and psychosocial interventions. By focusing on social work training as a mechanism for building resilience, the current study operationalises Menkhaus' conceptual framework. It offers a practical model for translating resilience theory into action, particularly in contexts like North-Eastern Nigeria where state resources are scarce and communities depend on grassroots support.

Akpan and Ogar (2020) examined community resilience and sustainable peace in Nigerian post-conflict societies, emphasising that resilience is both a coping mechanism and a foundation for peacebuilding. Their findings show that communities that rely on social capital, cultural practices, and grassroots mobilisation achieve more sustainable recovery than those dependent solely on external aid. However, their study primarily takes a theoretical approach, without empirically examining how professional training in social work could enhance these grassroots mechanisms. This creates a gap in understanding how structured interventions and professional skills can be integrated

with community-led efforts. The present study bridges this gap by empirically analysing how trained social workers can strengthen existing resilience practices in communities affected by insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Alhassan (2021) investigated youth inclusion in post-conflict community development in Nigeria, highlighting the critical role of young people in rebuilding fragile societies. His research demonstrated that exclusion from economic and political processes increases the likelihood of youth radicalisation, thereby undermining peacebuilding. However, his work focuses narrowly on youth, overlooking broader community-level dynamics and the role of social work in integrating different vulnerable groups, including women and children. This limitation leaves a gap in strategies for holistic community reintegration. The current study addresses this by situating youth within a wider community framework and examining how social workers can facilitate inclusive recovery processes across different demographic groups. In doing so, it extends Alhassan's findings into a more comprehensive model for post-conflict community development in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Bello (2021) analysed the reintegration of displaced persons in Nigeria, particularly the reconstruction of communities in the North-East. His findings underscore the importance of infrastructure provision, housing, and livelihood restoration in enabling sustainable return. While valuable, Bello's work underemphasises the psychosocial and safeguarding dimensions of reintegration. Infrastructure alone does not rebuild trust, heal trauma, or address vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence. The gap in Bello's research lies in the lack of attention to psychosocial interventions and professional social support mechanisms. The present study builds on Bello's work by integrating social work training into the resettlement process, highlighting how trauma-informed care, safeguarding frameworks, and community facilitation can comple-

ment infrastructure development. This approach ensures that resettlement is not only physically sustainable but also socially and psychologically resilient.

2.4 Gap in Literature

Existing scholarship on post-conflict recovery highlights the importance of peace operations (Doyle & Sambanis, 2020), micro-level resilience and livelihoods (Justino, 2021), and multidimensional community resilience (Menkhaus, 2021). Nigerian studies reinforce these insights, stressing grassroots resilience (Akpan & Ogar, 2020), youth inclusion (Alhassan, 2021), and infrastructure for reintegration (Bello, 2021). While valuable, these contributions remain fragmented. International research often privileges macro-level state-building, neglecting the lived realities of rural resettlement. Nigerian scholarship, though contextually rich, underemphasises the professional role of social work training, safeguarding frameworks, and psychosocial support in shaping recovery.

The gap, therefore, lies in the absence of integrated, context-specific studies that empirically assess how social work training influences resettlement outcomes, strengthens safeguarding mechanisms, and enhances psychosocial resilience in rural post-conflict communities. This study addresses that gap by focusing on North-Eastern Nigeria, applying a holistic framework that examines structural, social, and psychological dimensions of resettlement. In doing so, it advances policy-relevant knowledge on how trained social workers can act as catalysts for sustainable peace and reintegration in fragile rural contexts.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design informed by extant literature on post-conflict recovery and community development. A desk-based review approach was selected to synthesise insights from

peer-reviewed journals, institutional reports, and global case studies on resettlement, social work training, safeguarding, and psychosocial support (Doyle & Sambanis, 2020; Justino, 2021; UNDP, 2021; Bello, 2021). This approach allows for the identification of theoretical and practical trends while highlighting lessons applicable to North-Eastern Nigeria. The study area encompasses rural communities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States, particularly settlements such as Mallam Fatori, Kukawa, Baga, and Shuwari, which have been directly affected by Boko Haram insurgency. These areas are characterised by mass displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and fragile governance, making them appropriate for analysing post-conflict resettlement challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2020; NEMA, 2022).

Data sources include international development reports (UNICEF, 2019; UNFPA, 2020; World Bank, 2022), African case studies (Adebayo, 2020; Akpan & Ogar, 2020), and Nigerian scholarship (Alhassan, 2021; Bello, 2021). Analysis followed thematic synthesis, categorising evidence into five domains: resettlement challenges, social work training, safeguarding frameworks, psychosocial support, and comparative community experiences. This method enables a comprehensive, literature-driven evaluation of post-conflict resettlement, ensuring findings are contextually relevant and policy-oriented.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study are structured around the three central objectives: identifying primary resettlement challenges, evaluating the impact of social work training, and assessing the role of safeguarding and psychosocial support in enhancing community resilience. Drawing on extant literature, the findings reveal that displaced populations in North-Eastern Nigeria face severe livelihood disruption, weak institutional frameworks, and heightened vulnerability of

women and children. Evidence from global post-conflict contexts highlights that social work training, safeguarding mechanisms, and psychosocial support play transformative roles in reintegration. The results therefore provide a comparative basis for contextualising Nigeria's challenges within broader recovery frameworks.

Objective 1: Identified Primary Resettlement Challenges Faced By Rural Communities

The literature consistently highlights that post-conflict resettlement is shaped by overlapping challenges of insecurity, livelihood disruption, and institutional fragility. Human Rights Watch (2020) shows that persistent Boko Haram insurgency restricts mobility, undermining access to farms, markets, and schools. UNDP (2021) and World Bank (2022) report that displaced persons face severe infrastructure deficits in rural areas—poor shelter, limited health facilities, and absence of sustainable livelihoods. Justino (2021) further identifies that women and youth are disproportionately affected, experiencing exclusion from resource allocation and local governance. Nigerian scholarship mirrors these findings: Bello (2021) highlights weak reintegration frameworks, while Akpan and Ogar (2020) note fragile community resilience exacerbated by trauma and resource scarcity. Case studies from other fragile contexts, such as Sierra Leone and South Sudan (Schou & Haug, 2022), demonstrate similar patterns where displaced populations in rural resettlement areas remain trapped in cycles of poverty and dependency.

These findings affirm that post-conflict resettlement challenges in North-Eastern Nigeria are both structural and psychosocial. Galtung's (1969) structural violence theory explains how systemic deprivation—poverty, lack of services, insecurity—undermines reintegration. While interventions such as cash transfers and shelter projects exist (UNICEF, 2019; UNFPA, 2020), they often fail to address root causes of fra-

gility. International cases show that without inclusive governance, as noted by Paffenholz (2020), aid interventions risk reproducing dependency. In Nigeria, reliance on donor-driven initiatives has produced uneven outcomes across communities; Maiduguri benefits from NGO concentration, while areas like Malam Fatori remain underserved. Thus, the gap lies in weak institutional capacity to embed recovery within long-term community development frameworks. For this study, recognising these challenges underscores the necessity of strengthening locally grounded systems, where social workers serve not only as service providers but also as advocates for equitable policies and community-driven governance reforms.

Objective 2: Evaluating The Impact Of Social Work Training On Addressing Resettlement Challenges

The review indicates that social work training is critical in equipping practitioners to manage trauma, rebuild trust, and foster resilience. Alemu (2019) stresses trauma-informed care as foundational, while Olanrewaju and Yusuf (2020) highlight community-based interventions that improve trust and participation. At the global level, Aall (2020) and Doyle and Sambanis (2020) argue that professional interventions enhance peacebuilding when aligned with local contexts. In African cases, Amadi and Abdullah (2020) and Eke and Ajayi (2020) show that training focused on skills development and reconciliation strengthens community reintegration. Nigerian evidence reflects similar trends: Alhassan (2021) found that youth-focused interventions improved livelihood opportunities, while Bello (2021) links trained social workers to better psychosocial recovery. Comparative lessons from Uganda and Rwanda (Johnson, 2022) demonstrate that formal training in peace education and psychosocial care reduces community tensions and facilitates reintegration.

The impact of social work training lies in its ability to

bridge humanitarian relief with sustainable development. Sen's (1999) human development as freedom framework reinforces that interventions must expand capabilities, not just deliver relief. Yet in Nigeria, gaps persist: most social workers lack specialised training in trauma care, mediation, or safeguarding. As UNDP (2021) and World Bank (2022) emphasise, capacity-building is central to strengthening institutions in fragile states. Globally, models like Rwanda's post-genocide psychosocial recovery show how trained social workers facilitated trauma healing and reconciliation (Brown, 2022). Applied to North-Eastern Nigeria, this suggests that professionalised training in trauma care, mediation, and safeguarding can transform resettlement initiatives from short-term relief to sustainable reintegration. Thus, the discussion highlights that inadequate investment in training constitutes a major bottleneck, leaving resettlement programmes less effective in tackling deep-seated structural and psychosocial challenges.

Objective 3: Assessing the role of safeguarding and psychosocial support in enhancing community resilience

The literature demonstrates that safeguarding and psychosocial support are indispensable in post-conflict contexts. UNICEF (2019) emphasises the SAFE model—safety, access to healthcare, family, and education—as critical to protecting women and children. UNFPA (2020) highlights the need to prevent gender-based violence and strengthen reproductive health systems in humanitarian settings. Empirical work shows that psychosocial interventions such as counselling, support groups, and trauma-healing circles foster resilience and social cohesion (Brown, 2022; Menkhaus, 2021). Nigerian studies reinforce this: Chika & Musa (2021) show how gender-focused safeguarding reduces vulnerability among women, while Okoro (2021) links youth empowerment programmes with improved psychosocial outcomes. International evidence from post-conflict Colombia

and Liberia (Schou & Haug, 2022) demonstrates that psychosocial frameworks anchored in safeguarding enhance trust, rebuild family bonds, and promote collective recovery.

The role of safeguarding and psychosocial support lies in their ability to convert vulnerability into resilience. Community resilience theory (Akpan & Ogar, 2020; Menkhaus, 2021) underscores that recovery is not only material but also social and psychological. In North-Eastern Nigeria, inadequate safeguarding frameworks leave women and children at risk of exploitation, while displaced youth remain vulnerable to re-recruitment by armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2020). International models, such as community-based trauma healing in Liberia (Brown, 2022), show that safeguarding coupled with psychosocial support reduces cycles of violence and fosters reintegration. Yet in Nigeria, safeguarding remains donor-driven and fragmented, limiting sustainability. Thus, integrating safeguarding into national social work training curricula becomes essential. The discussion highlights that enhancing resilience requires embedding safeguarding and psychosocial care at the core of resettlement programmes, ensuring displaced communities transition from survival to recovery.

4.1 Summary

This study examined post-conflict resettlement challenges in rural North-Eastern Nigeria, with specific attention to the role of social work training, safeguarding, and psychosocial support in enhancing community resilience. Findings reveal that displacement caused by the Boko Haram insurgency has left rural communities vulnerable to insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, weak healthcare and education systems, and deepening poverty. Literature confirms that these challenges mirror global post-conflict experiences in fragile contexts such as South Sudan, Liberia, and Colombia, where communities struggle with resource scarcity and institutional fragility. The

study highlights that social work training—particularly in trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, and community-based interventions—has a significant impact on reintegration and psychosocial recovery. Safeguarding frameworks, such as UNICEF’s SAFE model, and psychosocial interventions emphasised by UNFPA and Brown (2022), are critical for protecting vulnerable populations and strengthening social cohesion. However, gaps remain in Nigeria due to fragmented donor-driven interventions, limited local capacity, and inadequate integration of safeguarding into national frameworks. Comparative evidence suggests that community resilience emerges strongest when interventions are participatory, context-driven, and underpinned by sustained institutional support. Thus, the study contributes to both theory and practice by underscoring the centrality of trained social workers in facilitating inclusive, sustainable post-conflict resettlement in Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper proposed the designed stepwise structure for mitigating resettlement challenges –

Stage 1: Risk Identification and Assessment

The first step in safeguarding and psychosocial support in post-conflict resettlement is risk identification and assessment. In contexts like North-Eastern Nigeria, where displacement caused by Boko Haram has left communities vulnerable, mapping risks becomes critical for intervention design. Vulnerabilities range from gender-based violence (GBV), child exploitation, and trafficking, to the psychological trauma experienced by survivors of violence, abduction, and displacement (UNICEF, 2019). Risk assessment involves identifying who is most at risk, where these risks occur, and what forms they take. For example, in displacement camps across Borno, women often report harassment when accessing food distribution points, while children face risks of recruitment into armed groups.

Globally, risk identification has proven central in frag-

ile contexts. In South Sudan, for instance, rapid gender and protection assessments conducted in camps revealed that women and adolescent girls were disproportionately exposed to violence, prompting agencies to create women-friendly spaces (Chika & Musa, 2021). Similarly, in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, trauma mapping helped practitioners identify collective vulnerabilities such as distrust, grief, and anger, shaping targeted psychosocial programmes (Brown, 2022). Applying these lessons to Nigeria suggests that risk assessments must move beyond surface-level surveys to in-depth participatory approaches, where displaced populations articulate their own vulnerabilities.

By training social workers in participatory risk analysis, Nigeria can institutionalise a system of early detection and prevention. This would enable the design of interventions that are not only reactive but also anticipatory, ensuring that communities are safeguarded before harm occurs.

Stage 2: Capacity Building and Training

The second stage emphasises building the capacity of frontline workers and community actors to implement safeguarding and psychosocial interventions effectively. Social workers, traditional leaders, teachers, and health workers require targeted training in trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, child protection, and gender-sensitive programming (Alemu, 2019; Doyle & Sambanis, 2020). Without such capacity, even well-designed frameworks remain theoretical. In Nigeria, gaps in training have often led to fragmented interventions, where humanitarian staff provide immediate aid without addressing long-term safeguarding needs.

International case studies demonstrate the transformative role of training. In Liberia, women-led safeguarding initiatives succeeded because women were trained to identify and respond to abuse cases, embedding accountability mechanisms in resettlement

camps (Ndubuisi, 2022). In Afghanistan, integrating psychosocial training into school curricula empowered teachers to act as counselors for conflict-affected children, significantly improving classroom behaviour and emotional stability (Menkhaus, 2021). These examples show that capacity building creates local ownership, making interventions more sustainable and culturally relevant.

Applied to North-Eastern Nigeria, social work training could equip professionals and community actors to detect early warning signs of trauma, abuse, and exploitation. For example, training women's associations in displacement camps to monitor child safety or empowering youth leaders in Damaturu to facilitate peace education can enhance both safeguarding and resilience. Thus, capacity building must be institutionalised within Nigeria's humanitarian and development policies, ensuring that safeguarding is not an ad-hoc initiative but a systematic component of national recovery strategies.

Stage 3: Implementation of Safeguarding Measures

Once risks are identified and capacity is built, safeguarding measures must be implemented in practical, context-sensitive ways. The SAFE model—emphasising Safety, Access to healthcare, Family and connection, and Education and economic security (UNICEF, 2019)—provides a holistic framework. Effective safeguarding includes establishing reporting mechanisms for abuse, creating safe spaces for women and children, and ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to essential services without discrimination.

Globally, Kosovo provides an illustrative example, where safeguarding during resettlement prioritised minority inclusion by guaranteeing equal access to housing and healthcare for ethnic minorities (Lawal & Tukur, 2021). In Colombia, community-led safeguarding committees helped monitor reintegration

of former combatants, ensuring that marginalised groups were protected from reprisal violence (Paffenholz, 2020). Both examples show that safeguarding works best when institutional structures align with grassroots mechanisms of accountability.

In Nigeria, displacement camps in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa have reported widespread gender-based violence and child exploitation (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Safeguarding measures could be operationalised through women-led camp governance structures, anonymous reporting hotlines, and child-friendly spaces monitored by trained social workers. Importantly, implementation must be participatory: communities themselves should help design rules, ensuring cultural appropriateness and trust. Without embedding safeguarding into daily camp governance, policies remain aspirational rather than protective.

Thus, safeguarding in Nigeria must move from reactive crisis management to proactive systems of protection. Institutionalising these measures would not only safeguard vulnerable populations but also foster trust in resettlement processes, reducing grievances that could trigger renewed cycles of violence.

Stage 4: Delivery of Psychosocial Support

Safeguarding must be complemented by psychosocial support that addresses the invisible wounds of conflict. Trauma from violence, abduction, sexual exploitation, and displacement often leaves individuals and communities fragmented, unable to reintegrate fully without healing interventions (Brown, 2022). Psychosocial support involves structured counselling, peer support groups, community dialogue, and peace education programmes.

Rwanda's post-genocide recovery highlights the power of psychosocial support. Community rituals combined with counselling restored collective identity, helping survivors process grief and rebuild trust (Brown, 2022). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, peace education integrated into schools reduced prejudice among

youth, fostering reconciliation in divided communities (Johnson, 2022). In Afghanistan, linking psychosocial support to education through school-based counselling helped traumatised children regain focus and stability (Menkhaus, 2021).

In North-Eastern Nigeria, returnees in towns like Bama and Damaturu face severe psychosocial distress due to loss of loved ones, exposure to violence, and prolonged displacement. Without interventions, such trauma leaves youth vulnerable to radicalisation. Drawing from Rwanda, Nigeria could embed storytelling, music, and traditional rituals into community healing sessions. Following Afghanistan's example, psychosocial support should be mainstreamed into schools, ensuring that children receive structured care alongside education. Peace education, inspired by Sri Lanka, could help rebuild interfaith trust in a region divided along religious lines.

Delivering psychosocial support in Nigeria requires well-trained social workers capable of blending formal counselling with culturally relevant practices. This dual approach ensures that interventions resonate with local communities, supporting long-term healing and reintegration.

Stage 5: Community Participation and Ownership

Community participation is central to sustainable safeguarding and psychosocial support. Post-conflict interventions imposed top-down often fail because they overlook local voices and priorities (Chambers, 1983; Adebayo, 2020). Participatory development theory emphasises that affected populations must be actively involved in designing, implementing, and monitoring interventions for them to succeed.

Internationally, Uganda offers an instructive model. In the aftermath of civil conflict, community-driven reconstruction enabled villages to prioritise their needs—whether schools, roads, or clinics—resulting in higher acceptance and sustainability compared to donor-led projects (Schou & Haug, 2022). Similarly,

in Liberia, women's associations not only monitored safeguarding but also helped design camp governance systems that reflected local values (Ndubuisi, 2022). These cases underscore that communities are not passive recipients of aid but active agents of recovery.

In Nigeria, displaced persons in Kukawa have already demonstrated resilience by forming community-led governance structures that regulate access to scarce resources (NEMA, 2022). Such practices highlight the potential for participatory models in resettlement. Social workers trained in participatory methodologies could facilitate dialogue platforms, bringing together youth groups, women's associations, and traditional leaders to articulate priorities and co-design interventions.

By ensuring participation, safeguarding and psychosocial frameworks gain legitimacy and cultural relevance. More importantly, they foster community ownership, reducing dependency on external actors. In the Nigerian context, participatory approaches can help transform resettlement from a temporary humanitarian exercise into a long-term development pathway, rooted in collective agency and resilience.

Stage 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Effective safeguarding and psychosocial frameworks require robust systems of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). Without tracking progress, interventions risk becoming symbolic rather than impactful. MEL allows practitioners to assess whether safeguarding measures reduce risks, whether psychosocial programmes foster healing, and what adjustments are needed for greater effectiveness (UNDP, 2021).

Globally, the World Bank (2022) has emphasised MEL in fragile contexts, advocating community-based monitoring that includes local voices. In Colombia, monitoring reintegration programmes revealed that while economic aid reached ex-combatants, insufficient psychosocial support left many vulnerable to re-

lapse into violence (Paffenholz, 2020). In Sierra Leone, regular evaluation of trauma healing initiatives helped adapt programmes to changing community needs, ensuring their relevance.

For Nigeria, MEL must go beyond donor reporting to embed feedback loops within communities. For example, women's groups could monitor safeguarding compliance in camps, while youth leaders could track the effectiveness of peace education initiatives. Social workers trained in data collection and participatory evaluation would be central to this process.

By institutionalising MEL, Nigeria can ensure accountability, adapt interventions to emerging risks, and document best practices. Ultimately, MEL transforms safeguarding and psychosocial frameworks into dynamic systems that evolve with community realities, strengthening resilience over time.

Stage 7: Sustainability and Institutionalisation

The final stage ensures that safeguarding and psychosocial support transcend short-term humanitarian aid and become embedded in long-term development strategies. Sustainability requires institutionalisation within national policies, integration into local governance systems, and continuous investment in capacity building (World Bank, 2022; UNDP, 2021).

International examples illustrate this necessity. In Rwanda, trauma-healing programmes became part of the national education system, ensuring that peace education outlived donor cycles (Brown, 2022). In Uganda, local councils absorbed community-led safeguarding structures, embedding them within governance frameworks (Schou & Haug, 2022). Liberia's women-led safeguarding initiatives transitioned into formal policy through advocacy, ensuring state recognition (Ndubuisi, 2022).

Nigeria faces challenges of fragmented donor-driven interventions and weak institutional capacity. To overcome this, safeguarding and psychosocial sup-

port must be integrated into national resettlement and social welfare policies. Training curricula for social workers should institutionalise trauma-informed care, mediation, and safeguarding principles. Moreover, partnerships with civil society and traditional institutions can help root interventions in local contexts, ensuring cultural legitimacy.

Sustainability also demands funding mechanisms that extend beyond humanitarian cycles. Government budgets, complemented by international development funds, should prioritise safeguarding and psychosocial support as essential components of recovery.

By institutionalising these frameworks, Nigeria can transform resettlement from temporary relief into a pathway for long-term peace, resilience, and community-driven development.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that post-conflict resettlement in North-Eastern Nigeria is hindered by overlapping structural and psychosocial challenges that perpetuate vulnerability and dependency. While humanitarian interventions provide short-term relief, sustainable reintegration requires addressing root causes of fragility through inclusive policies, institutional reforms, and strengthened community participation. The findings emphasise that social work training equips practitioners with essential skills for trauma healing, community dialogue, and safeguarding, thereby bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and long-term development. Comparative evidence from other conflict-affected societies demonstrates that trained social workers are crucial in promoting trust, rebuilding social capital, and facilitating resilience at both household and community levels. Safeguarding and psychosocial support further enhance these outcomes by protecting vulnerable groups, preventing re-recruitment of displaced youth into armed groups, and fostering collective recovery. However,

the Nigerian context remains constrained by weak institutional capacity, over-reliance on donor-driven projects, and fragmented coordination. Therefore, the conclusion reinforces the study's central proposition: post-conflict resettlement must evolve from being primarily a humanitarian exercise to a holistic, community-driven process anchored in professional social work practice. This shift is critical for achieving sustainable peace, resilience, and inclusive development in conflict-affected rural settings.

5.1 Recommendations

Given the established findings, the paper recommends the government:

- Strengthens social work training in trauma-informed care, mediation, and safeguarding.
- Institutionalise psychosocial support in resettlement programmes; promote participatory, community-driven interventions; integrate safeguarding into national frameworks.
- Reduces dependence on donor-led initiatives through sustainable government investment. These steps will enhance resilience, protect vulnerable groups, and foster durable peace in post-conflict Nigeria.

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