



GSJ: Volume 10, Issue 5, May 2022, Online: ISSN 2320-9186

[www.globalscientificjournal.com](http://www.globalscientificjournal.com)

**INVOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT AND IMPACT MITIGATION OF FINIMA COMMUNITY IN BONNY LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

This research has developed a checklist of physical planning measures which can be used to mitigate the negative effects of involuntary migration within Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the physical planning measures that can be used to mitigate the negative effects of involuntary displacement on the population of Finima. The study was a mixed methods study that employed both quantitative and Qualitative techniques and tools. They include; general questionnaire administered to 100 participants, individual in-depth interview using structured questionnaires, focus group discussion with people that experienced the resettlement, key informant interview, (Chiefs, Finima relocation committee members and NLNG Personnel) and Personal observation (Participatory Transects). The findings revealed that the resettlement and siting of the NLNG changed the employment status of the Finima people as more people gained employment after the resettlement. In other words, the negative impacts have been ameliorated by the improved quality of life.

**Keywords:** Involuntary, displacement, mitigate, planning, spatial

**Objective**

The objective of the is to;

Determine the physical planning measures to mitigate the negative effects of involuntary displacement on the population of Finima.

## **Introduction**

Involuntary resettlement occurs when people are evicted or forced out of their homes and or land as a result of development or natural and man-made disaster (Cernea, 1996). It is one of the dominant causes of internal spatial mobility worldwide. This subset of forced migration has been historically associated with the construction of dams for hydroelectric power and irrigation, and various development projects, such as mining, agriculture, industrial plants, railways, roads and housing development, recreational facilities, conservation projects, and forestry reserves or natural and man-made disaster such as earthquake, landslide, erosion, flooding, war and civil unrest.

According to Terminski (2015) each year over 15 million people are forced to abandon their homes to make space for economic infrastructure development. Some of such developments include the hydroelectric dam on China's Yangtze River constructed between 1994 and 2006 where over 1.4million people were displaced. In India the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary displaced 24 villages between 1999 and 2003 to reintroduce the Asiatic lion to the area. The construction of the Akosombo dam on the Volta River in Ghana displaced 82,000 people (about 1% of the country's population) from 1961-1965. The construction of the Kanji dam in present day Niger State, Nigeria led to the flooding of 200 villages and displacement of 50,000 people in 1968, also the construction of Kiri dam in Guyuk in Adamawa State of Nigeria, led to the displacement of 20,000 people in 1982 (Terminski, 2013).

Involuntary resettlement are acts and or omissions involving the coerced displacement of individuals, groups and communities from homes and or lands and common property resources that were occupied or depended upon, thus eliminating or limiting the ability of an individual, group or community to reside or work in a particular dwelling, residence or location, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection (United Nations Basic

Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement, 2007). According to The United Nations Human Rights Commission (1993), involuntary displaced persons require the restoration of their capacity to generate income and protection from the state. While people displaced as a result of development have similar experiences to forced evictees (refuges) in terms of economic and social loss.

The results of forced resettlement have often been negative for those people who have to move and the host population. Most people are often left socially, and institutionally disrupted and economically worse off and the environment suffering such things as high water and air pollution, increased traffic jams, increased flooding, loss in open space and park as a result of influx of people (Jain, 2011). The consequences of involuntary resettlement have strong impact on virtually all areas of life both of individuals and of communities. According to Cernea (1996), there are eight potential risks of displacement. These include Landlessness; Joblessness; Homelessness; Marginalization; Food insecurity; Increase in morbidity and mortality; and Social disarticulation. Also, the resolutions of the United Nations Human Rights on Displacement (1993) mentions work, livelihood, health, security of persons as other risks or violations faced by forcefully displaced persons.

There are basically two types of involuntary resettlement, (Gellert and Lynch, 2003). First is the Primary or Direct displacement, where people are moved from their traditional lands to make way for development projects like in Finima in Bonny, Rivers State where the entire community was moved to make way for the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG). This type of displacement is predictable and can be mitigated through planning. The second is known as the Secondary or Indirect displacement where people move as a result of the negative consequences of the development project, like the construction of the Kanji dam that resulted to the flooding of 200 villages in Kaduna State, Nigeria in 1968.

This study identifies the socio-economic impact of the involuntary resettlement of the Finima community and suggests physical planning measures to mitigate the negative impact on the individuals, families and the community.

## **Research Design**

The mixed research method was utilized for this study. Elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (use of quantitative and qualitative viewpoints, data collection and analysis techniques) were used for broad purposes breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Creswell, 2014).

The quantitative and qualitative strands of the research were performed simultaneously (convergent parallel design), and their results were brought together in the overall interpretation (Lewis, 2018).

Qualitative tool used to gather data included; individual depth interview, a one on one interview was carried out with one respondent at a time with a structured questionnaire. Focus group discussion with men and women was also used (those that experienced the resettlement) were selected from the six zones (one person per zone) of the New Finima. Key informant interview, (Chiefs, Finima relocation committee members and NLNG Personnel) and Personal observation (Participatory Transects) were also used to gather information.

Quantitative technique used descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, tables, graph and charts to analyse data.

## **Findings**

The available literature, participatory transects walk, key informant interview and focus group discussion show that the resettlement of Finima Community and siting of the NLNG have brought improvements in the living standard of the people. The people were resettled into

improved houses with modern facilities. A total of 500 modern housing units were built by the NNPC and handed over to the community. The houses were constructed of brick aluminium roofing sheets.

They have high access to regular electricity and improved water supply. The resettlement and siting of the NLNG changed the employment status of the Finima people as more people gained employment after the resettlement. Also, there has been increase of monthly income of household in the community after the resettlement.

There are numbers of projects provided by the NLNG which the Finima community have benefitted presents some specific projects.

The NLNG has provided ferries to transport both indigenes and non-indigenes to and fro Port Harcourt for free while at the inception of the NLNG Planning, selected community opinion leaders were flown overseas to experience the likely developmental activities that could be triggered off by an LNG project in their community. Transact walk within the community showed that New Finima community was provided with stadium; concrete roads, traditional ruler's place, burial ground fencing and gate, Bakery for women.

Focus Group Discussion and key informant interviews revealed a high sense of loss of cultural heritage and not dwelling within the traditional sphere.

### **Physical Planning Measures to Mitigate on Negatives Effects**

Focus Group Discussions and Key informant interviews revealed that the people were not resettled within clusters of kindred and families as they originally settled in Old Finima; rather they were allocated houses according to the size of houses they owned in the old Finima, thereby violating the right of family and kindred cohesion and disintegration of previously cohesive

community. They expressed high sense of loss of cultural heritage and introduction of alien culture.

They lost that social network of survival they built over the years and enjoyed in Old Finima. Also, the population has over grown the existing facilities due to influx of people thereby stretching the facilities provided by the NLNG.

To mitigate these negative effects the following Physical planning measures are suggested:-

1. A Physical Development Plan that will accommodate future expansion and growth of the community should be prepared and executed by the Federal Government and the NLNG.
2. The new plan should resettle people in clusters of kindred and families to restore the community cohesion and social network that existed in the old Finima.
3. The Plan should make provision for an economic activity (institutional development) that will stimulate the economy of the community.
4. Stakeholders should be involved in the planning of any developmental activities that concern the community. This is because research revealed that Bonny local Government Area and Town Planners in Rivers State Government did not play any role in the process of resettlement of the people of Finima. The Rivers State Government played a limited role of only taking record of the numbers of persons to be relocated from old to new Finima for compensation purpose. The relocation/resettlement was carried out by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the NNPC and the Relocation Committee set up by the NNPC.
5. The services of Town Planners must be engage by the NLNG and Bonny Local Government Council for monitoring and development control in the area.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The outcome of this study includes the identification of positive and negative effects of the resettlement of the Finima community. The Finima people were resettled into improved housing built by the NNPC. The houses were constructed of brick aluminium roofing sheets. They have access to regular electricity and improved water supply. The siting of the NLNG changed the employment status of the Finima people as more people gained employment after the resettlement. This has brought about increase of monthly income of household in the community.

There are numbers of projects provided by the NLNG from which the Finima community have benefitted some of which include sports arena, concrete roads, and traditional ruler's palace, bakery for women, etc. The NLNG has provided ferries to transport both indigenes and non-indigenes to and fro Port Harcourt for free while at the inception of the NLNG Planning, selected community opinion leaders were flown overseas to experience the likely developmental activities that could be triggered off by an LNG project in their community.

The resettlement has cultural effects because the community land (Old Finima) has been taken over by the NLNG. The inhabitants had to be resettled by the government, thereby subjecting them to a lot of inconveniences such as loss of property, loss of cultural heritage and social ties. Allocation of houses did not follow the original settlement pattern of the community where the people settled in clusters of families and kindred etc.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations are made generally on the basis of the mitigation measures in the preceding page.

1. There is the need for Physical Development Plan that will accommodate the future growth and expansion of the community. It is necessary to do this to reduce congestion, pressure on the existing infrastructure and facilities, also to have a functional, beautiful and safe environment. It is imperative that monitoring and evaluation must be an integral part of the process of planning and implementation, whereas external monitoring and evaluation units are also needed to carry out some control and compliance. This should be an independent agency that should be set up by the Federal Government. Its activities must be on-going.
2. The new plan should resettle people in cluster of kindred and families to restore the community cohesion and social network that existed in the old Finima. This will take care of the feeling of sense of loss of cultural heritage and social ties the individuals and family and having.
3. There is need also for deliberate provision of economic activities (e.g. institutional development) that will stimulate the economy of the community. This will enhance the socio-economic life of the community by creating direct employment for the people and this will spring up new businesses within the community.

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