

IDP SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY BENUE STATE

June 2025

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Internal Displacement
Solutions Fund



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IDP Socio-Economic Survey conducted in Benue State in June 2025 offers critical insights into the living conditions, and resilience strategies of internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in camps and camp-like settings. Covering 376 households across 20 sites in four LGAs, the survey was implemented by the Benue State Government in collaboration with key partners and supported by the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF).

About 76 per cent of respondents were displaced before 2016, with many experiencing multiple displacements. In terms of living conditions, 59 per cent of households reported poor or very poor living conditions; only seven per cent rated their conditions as good. A look into the livelihood assessment showed that agriculture remains the primary source of income, though dependency on humanitarian aid and informal trades have increased. Most households earn less than ₦20,000 monthly. After accessing the highest level of education attained, primary education emerged as the most common level attained (54%), with significant barriers including fees, lack of supplies, and teacher shortages.

While accessing some food security indicators, the survey brought to light that half of the households eat only two meals per day. Coping strategies include reducing meal sizes (49%) and skipping meals (42%). Seventy-five per cent of the respondents rely on government hospitals to access health services and facilities, with limited spending capacity and some reliance on traditional healers or self-medication.

The survey brings to light the need for flexible, evidence-based, and inclusive approaches to durable solutions, emphasizing the importance of security, livelihoods, and access to services in shaping IDPs' decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (MRRR)

Benue State Emergency Management Agency (ADSEMA)

Benue State Bureau of Statistics (ADSBS)

Benue State Budget And Economic Planning Commission

Benue State Planning Commission (ASPC)

Ministry of Information & Strategy

Ministry of Women Affairs

Ministry of Local Government Affairs

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internal Displaced Persons (NCFRMI)

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

Nigeria Red Cross Society (NRCS)

Modibbo Adama University, Yola



INTRODUCTION

Benue State continues to face the long-term impacts of displacement driven by conflict, communal violence, and environmental shocks. In response to the evolving humanitarian and recovery needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Benue State Government—through the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (MRRR), the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), and other key ministries and agencies—has prioritized the generation of evidence-based data to inform durable solutions.

As part of this effort, a comprehensive **Socio-Economic Survey** was conducted across IDP camps and camp-like settings in the state. This survey was implemented in collaboration with the State Bureau of Statistics (SBS), the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), and supported by the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF). The survey aimed to assess the socio-economic conditions of displaced households, including their access to basic services, livelihoods, education, health, shelter, and humanitarian assistance.

A total of 376 households were interviewed using structured, face-to-face questionnaires administered by trained enumerators. The data collected provides a robust foundation for understanding the living standards, vulnerabilities, and resilience capacities of IDPs, and supports the design of targeted interventions that promote recovery, inclusion, and long-term development.

This socio-economic profiling exercise reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that the needs and aspirations of displaced populations are central to policy and programmatic responses. It also reinforces the importance of localized data in shaping durable solutions that are safe, voluntary, and dignified.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the socio-economic survey are to:

- I. Assess the living conditions of IDP households in camps and camp-like settings, including access to shelter, food, water, sanitation, and healthcare.
- II. Evaluate access to education, livelihoods, and income-generating opportunities among displaced populations.
- III. Identify gaps in humanitarian assistance and service delivery across sectors.
- IV. Understand household-level coping mechanisms

- and resilience strategies in displacement settings.
- V. Support evidence-based decision-making for recovery, reintegration, and durable solutions programming.

METHODOLOGY

A structured, face-to-face interview methodology was chosen for the survey to allow for in-depth responses and to account for literacy levels. Interviews were conducted by trained enumerators who administered the survey instrument to each sampled head of household across the camps in Benue State.

Given the population size of IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings in Benue State, the survey targeted a sample of households. This approach ensured representative coverage and maximized data accuracy for analysing household living conditions.

The questionnaire was developed to capture demographic information, household size, length of stay in the camp, and specific living conditions of IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings. Additional questions were included to understand factors influencing these choices, such as safety, access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and family considerations.

The questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot camp within Benue State to ensure clarity, cultural relevance, and suitability. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine question-wording and response options.

A team of enumerators fluent in English, and local languages (Fulfulde, Hausa and Kanuri) and familiar with the cultural context of the camps from SEMA and other partners were trained. The training covered survey objectives, interview techniques, ethical considerations, and the importance of neutrality and confidentiality.

Household Interviews: Enumerators visited each household within the camps and conducted interviews with the heads of household. In cases where the head was unavailable, a senior household member was interviewed. Responses were recorded digitally on tablets to ensure accuracy and facilitate real-time data entry.

Informed consent was obtained from each respondent before beginning the interview. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and responses were anonymized to protect identities. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no repercussions for opting out. Data collected was cleaned, anonymized, and processed for analysis.



376

Interviewed Households



42

Average Age of Respondents



5

Average Household Size

Gender of Respondents



38%

Female



63%

Male

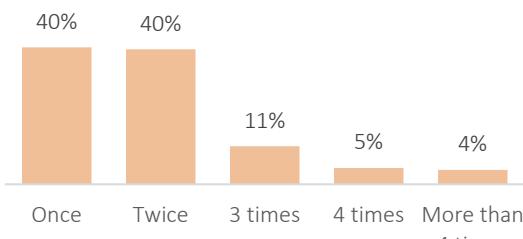


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IDP Camps and Camp-like Settings

To understand the socio-economic conditions of IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings in Benue State, the state government through the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Humanitarian Services, and other partners surveyed four Local Government Areas (LGAs) where IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings were situated. Out of the 2,758 displaced households living in 20 camps and camp-like settings in the state, 376 were sampled and interviewed. The respondents were primarily heads of households (HoH). Where the HoH was absent, a senior household member was interviewed.

Figure 2: Number of Displacement



The self-reported living conditions of internally displaced households residing in camps and camp-like settings across Benue State reveals a concerning trend of widespread deprivation, with the majority of households reporting substandard living conditions. Forty-one per cent of IDP households described their living condition as “poor”, while an additional 18 per cent categorized their situation as “very poor”. Combined, nearly six in ten households (59%) are living in conditions that fall below average standards.

Thirty-four per cent of households reported “average” living conditions, suggesting that while some basic needs may be met, these households still face significant vulnerabilities.

Only 7% of respondents rated their living conditions as “good”, indicating that very few IDPs in camp settings experience a level of stability or comfort that meets minimum standards for dignity and well-being.

Figure 4: Household Living Condition

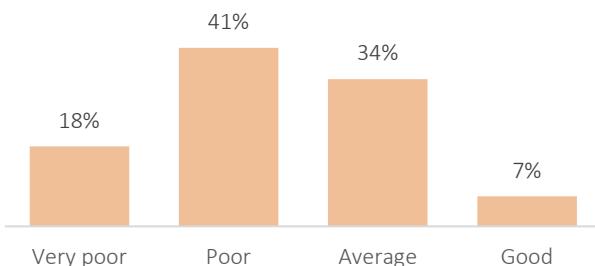
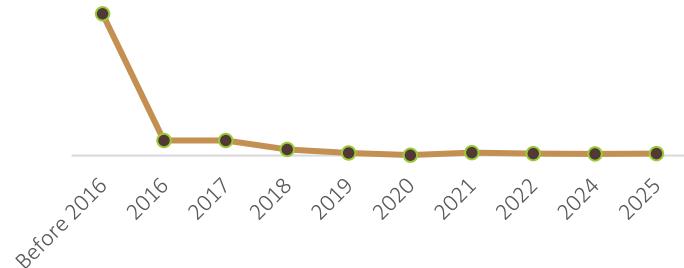


Figure 3: Year of First Displacement



Only 63 per cent of households reported receiving any form of assistance, while a significant 38% received none. Even among those who have received aid, the support is heavily skewed toward immediate survival needs (food and shelter), with limited investment in longer-term resilience such as education, health, and livelihoods.

This imbalance may contribute to the persistence of poor living conditions and hinder progress toward durable solutions.

Figure 5: Household Received Assistance

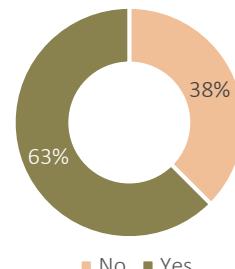
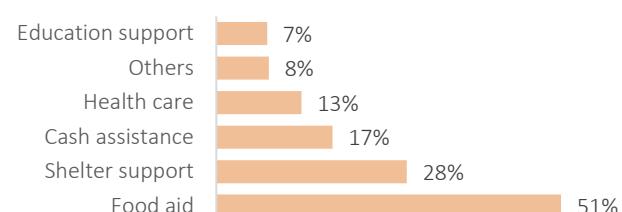


Figure 6: Assistance Received



LIVELIHOOD

The two charts below on “Primary Source of Livelihood Before Displacement” and “Primary Source of Livelihood During Displacement”, offer a comparative view of how displacement has affected the economic activities of affected populations. While agriculture remains the backbone of livelihoods both before and during displacement, there is a notable shift toward aid dependency and informal survival strategies. The introduction of humanitarian assistance as a livelihood source and the modest rise in petty trade and manual

services reflect the adaptive strategies of displaced populations in the face of constrained opportunities. Before displacement, basic agriculture (farming) was the primary livelihood for 83% of the population. During displacement, this figure slightly decreased to 79%, indicating that despite the upheaval, many households have managed to maintain some level of agricultural activity, due to its accessibility and low entry barrier.

Figure 7: Primary Source of Livelihood Before Displacement

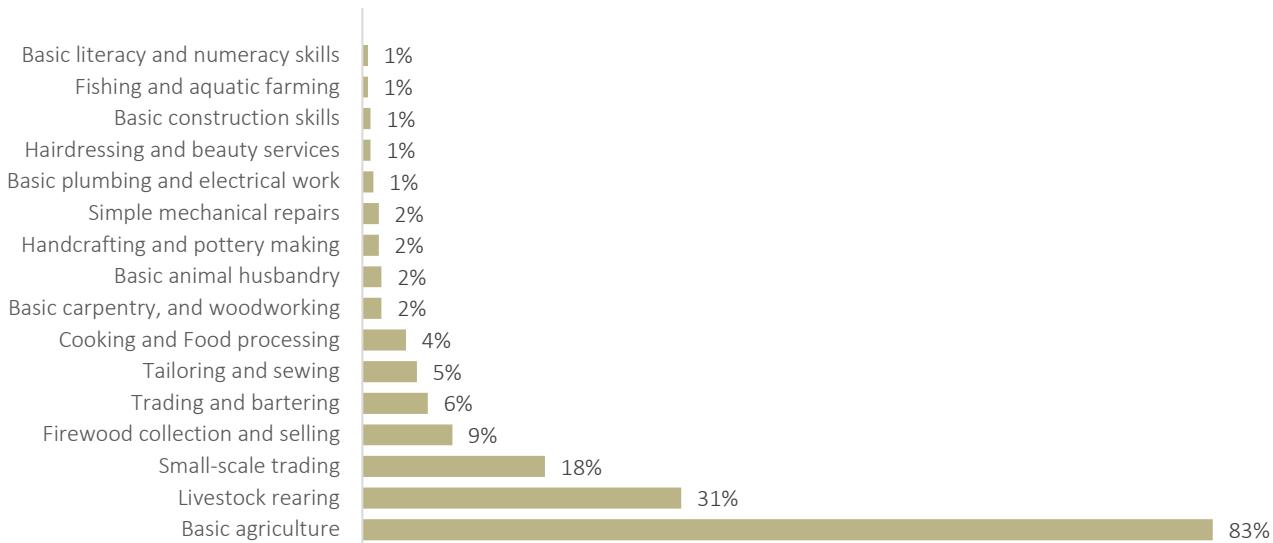
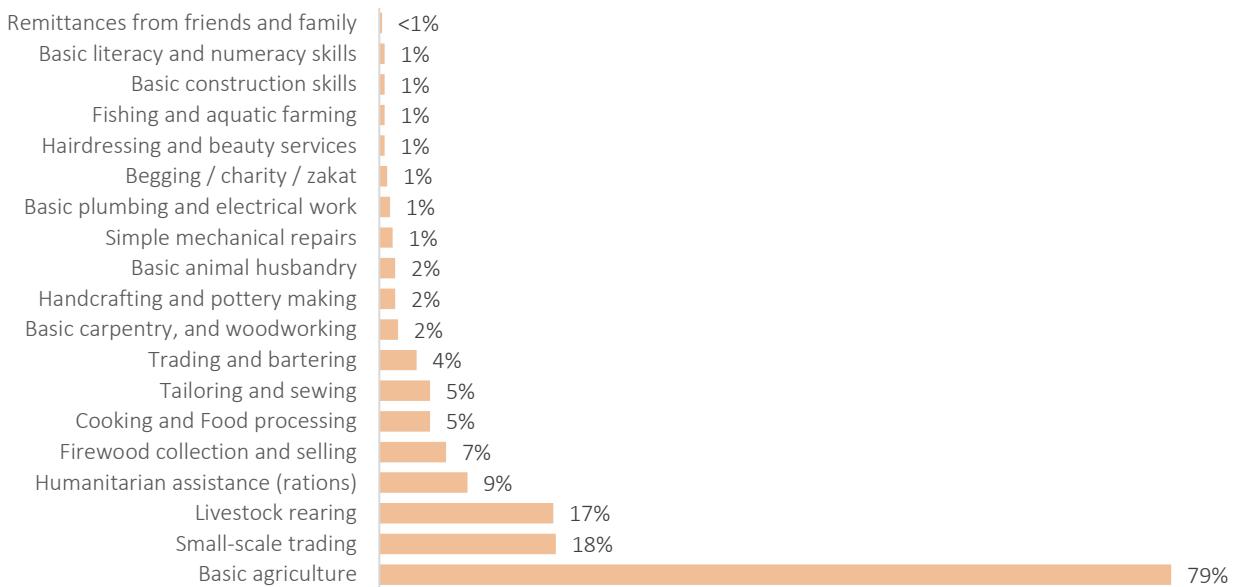


Figure 8: Primary Source of Livelihood During Displacement



*Multiple options selected

LIVELIHOOD

Figure 9: Average Monthly Income of Households

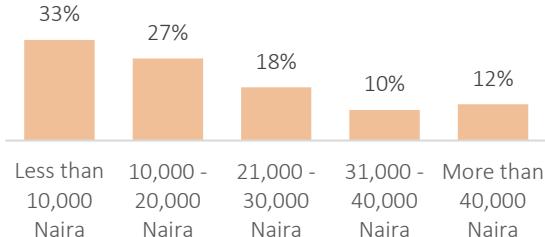


Figure 10: Ability to Meet Basic Needs

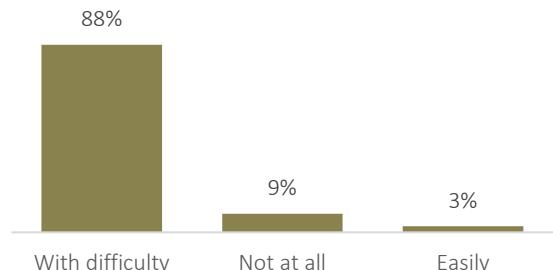
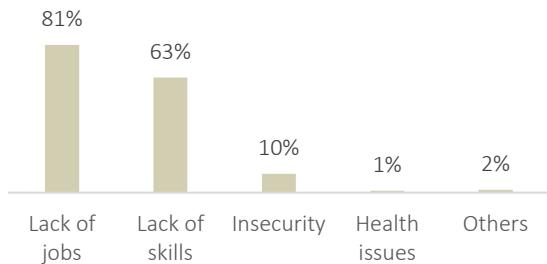


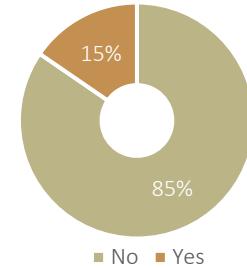
Figure 11: Barriers to Gain Employment



The convergence of low income, limited expenditure, and reliance on aid paints a picture of households operating at or below subsistence levels.

A large proportion of households earn less than ₦20,000 per month, with very few exceeding ₦40,000. This low income base severely limits household resilience. On the other hand, the majority report meeting their needs “with difficulty” or “not at all”, reinforcing the narrative of economic vulnerability.

Figure 12: Household Own a Land

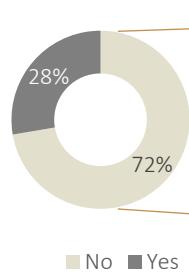


The most cited barriers to employment are lack of jobs (81%) and lack of skills (63%).

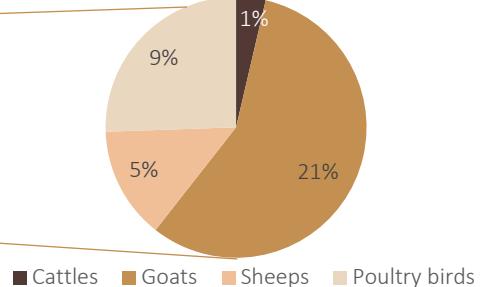
This aligns with the limited diversity in livelihoods and the low uptake of skilled trades both before and during displacement.

Insecurity (10%) and health issues (1%) are less frequently cited, indicating that structural economic issues outweigh situational or personal constraints.

Household Own Livestock



Types of Livestock



Livestock ownership is a critical asset. It not only supplements household nutrition but also provides a potential income stream through sales or barter. However, the relatively low diversity in livestock types may limit resilience, especially if households are overly dependent on cattle, which are more vulnerable to

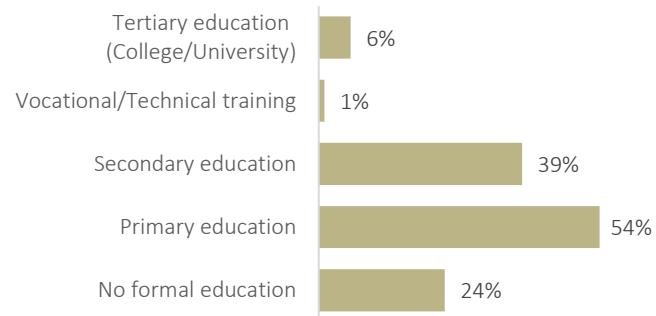
disease and require more resources to maintain. Seventy-two per cent of households own livestock, while 28% do not. Among those who own livestock, goats are the most commonly owned (21%), followed by poultry birds (9%), sheeps (5%), and cattles (1%).

EDUCATION

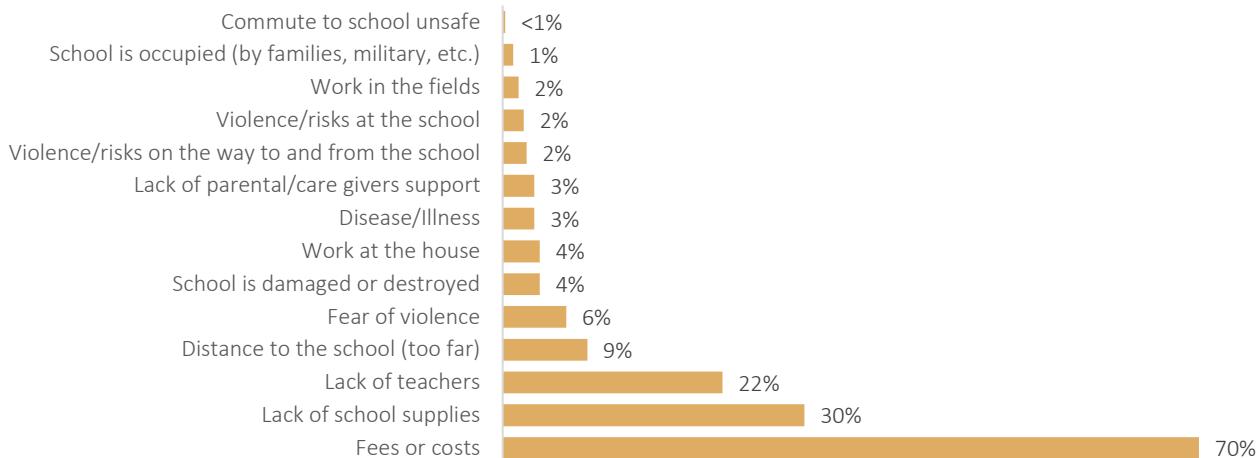
The low levels of tertiary and vocational education suggest that most individuals are not equipped for skilled or formal sector jobs. This aligns with earlier findings (Figure 11) where 81% of respondents cited lack of jobs and 63% cited lack of skills as barriers to employment.

The minimal vocational training (1%) further limits opportunities for self-employment or participation in trades that require specialized skills. Primary education is the most common level attained, with 54 per cent of household members falling into this category. Secondary education follows at 39 per cent.

Education Attained by Members of Household*



Barriers to Education*



When juxtaposed with earlier findings on education levels, livelihoods, and income and coping strategies, a clear pattern emerges: economic hardship is both a cause and consequence of limited educational attainment. There is a complex interplay of economic, infrastructural, and security-related factors, with significant implications for long-term development and resilience.

The most significant barrier is fees or costs, cited by 70% of respondents. This shows the impact of poverty on educational access, especially in displacement or low-income settings. Lack of school supplies is the

second most reported barrier at 30 per cent, reinforcing the theme of material deprivation. Lack of teachers (22%) is a major institutional challenge, indicating that even where schools exist, they may be understaffed or under-resourced.

Distance to school (9%) also presents a logistical barrier, particularly in rural or insecure areas.

A combined 18 per cent of responses relate to safety and conflict: fear of violence (6%), school being attacked (4%), school damaged or destroyed (4%), violence on the way to school (3%), violence at school (2%).

*Multiple options selected

FOOD SECURITY

Only 20 per cent of households reported spending more than ₦40,000 monthly on food, suggesting that a minority have relatively better purchasing power or access to food resources. Twenty-six per cent of households spend between ₦10,000 and ₦20,000, while 24 per cent spend less than ₦10,000, indicating that half of the surveyed households operate on very limited food budgets.

Fifteen per cent spend between ₦20,001 and ₦30,000, and 13 per cent fall within the ₦30,001–₦40,000 range.

Meanwhile, 50 per cent of households report eating two meals per day, while 45 per cent manage three meals per day. Households with lower monthly food spending (₦20,000 or less) are more likely to consume fewer meals per day, reflecting constrained access to adequate nutrition.

The fact that nearly half of the households eat only two meals daily, despite some spending over ₦30,000 monthly, may also point to high food prices, market access challenges, or large household sizes diluting per capita consumption. This also may not be too far from the reality of the average Nigerian that consumes two meals per day as a result of the inflation of commodities and the harsh economic realities in the country.

Source of food presents the primary means through which internally displaced households in camps and camp-like settings in Benue State access food. There is a diverse but uneven reliance on different food sources, reflecting both resilience strategies and gaps in humanitarian support.

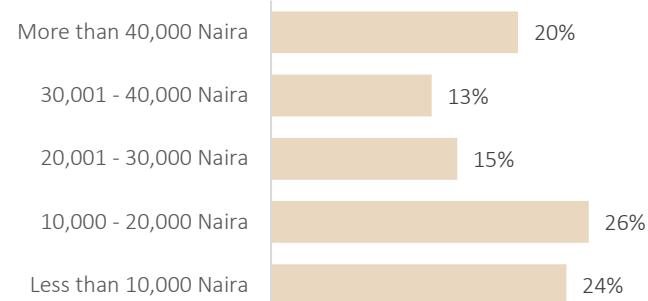
Eighty-one per cent of households reported relying on own production as a source of food. IDPs engage in small-scale farming, gardening, or livestock rearing within or near the camps. It also reflects a degree of self-reliance and adaptation to protracted displacement. Seventy per cent of households obtain food through purchase, market access and cash availability, whether through income, remittances, or cash-based assistance, play a significant role in food security.

In addition, 30 per cent of households reported receiving food aid, highlighting the continued importance of humanitarian assistance.

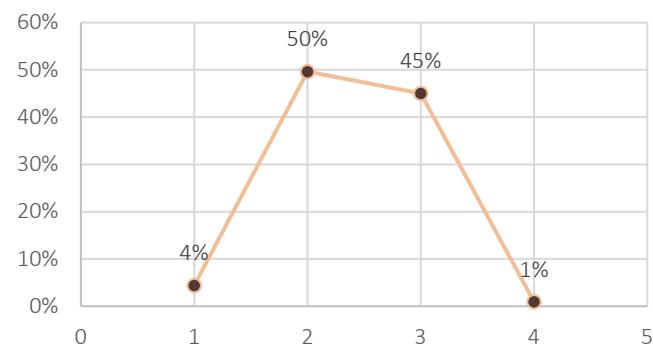
The most commonly reported coping strategy was reducing meal sizes, employed by 49 per cent of respondents. This is closely followed by skipping meals, which affects 42 per cent, indicating a significant level of food stress. Eating less preferred food is another widespread tactic, used by 29% and borrowing food (20%), reflecting reliance on social networks or community support systems.

*Multiple options selected

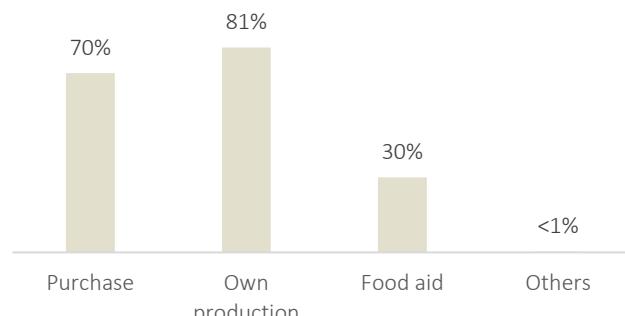
Household Average Monthly Food Expenditure



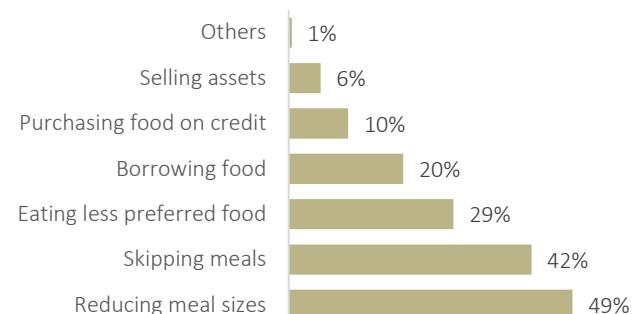
Frequency of Meals Per Day



Source of Food*

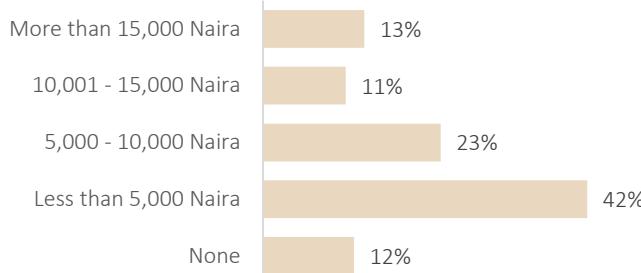


Coping Mechanism*

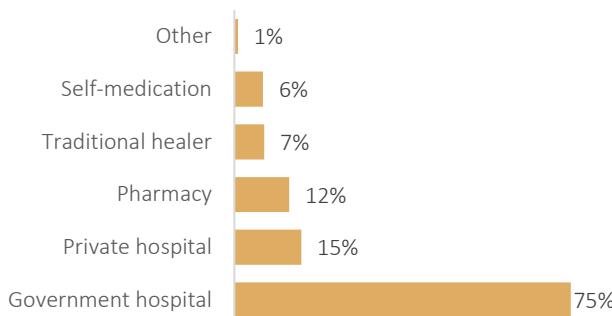


HEALTH

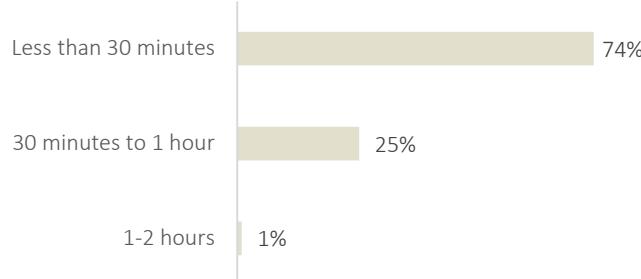
Average Monthly Expenditure on Healthcare Per Household



Main Source of Healthcare*



Distance to Nearest Health Facility



From the data on food security, we observed that households are employing a range of coping mechanisms to manage food insecurity. The most common strategies such as reducing meal sizes (49%), skipping meals (42%), and eating less preferred food (29%) are behaviours typically associated with households experiencing economic hardship.

This is further contextualized by the average monthly expenditure per household which shows that a large proportion of households fall into the lower expenditure brackets, with many spending less than ₦15,000 per month. This limited financial capacity likely constrains their ability to spend sufficiently on healthcare.

Moreover, the main source of healthcare for 75 per cent of households rely on government hospitals, with smaller percentages turning to private hospitals (15%), pharmacies (12%), or traditional healers (7%). This reliance on public healthcare services aligns with the low expenditure levels and suggests that many households cannot afford private healthcare options. The presence of self-medication (6%) and traditional healing also reflects limited access to formal healthcare, possibly due to cost, distance, or cultural preferences.

Seventy-four per cent of households are within 30 minutes of a health facility, while 25 per cent are between 30 minutes to 1 hour away, and only 1 per cent reported a distance of 1–2 hours. This suggests that physical access to healthcare infrastructure is relatively good for the majority of the population.

While geographic access to healthcare appears adequate, economic vulnerability, as evidenced by low household expenditures and food-related coping strategies plays a more decisive role in shaping healthcare choices.

*Multiple options selected



CONCLUSION

The socio-economic profile of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Benue State reveals a landscape marked by vulnerability, limited access to essential services, and constrained livelihood opportunities. Despite the resilience demonstrated by many households—particularly through continued engagement in agriculture and informal economic activities—most IDPs remain trapped in conditions of poverty and deprivation.

A majority of households live in poor or very poor conditions, with limited access to adequate shelter, food, and healthcare.

Livelihoods are predominantly subsistence-based, with over 80 per cent relying on basic agriculture. However, income levels remain critically low, with most households earning less than ₦20,000 monthly.

Food insecurity is widespread, with many households reducing meal sizes or skipping meals altogether. While own production and market purchases are primary food sources, food aid remains essential for a significant portion of the population.

Educational attainment is low, with primary education being the highest level for most household members. Barriers such as school fees, lack of supplies, and teacher shortages hinder access to learning.

Healthcare access, though geographically adequate, is limited by financial constraints, pushing some households toward self-medication or traditional healing practices.

These findings point to the urgent need for integrated, multi-sectoral interventions that address both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development goals. Enhancing access to education, healthcare, and diversified livelihoods—alongside targeted support for food security—will be critical to improving the well-being and self-reliance of displaced populations in Benue State.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Food Security and Assistance Planning:

Support agricultural and livelihood activities within camps to sustain and scale up own production.

Ensure market functionality and affordability, especially for households with limited income.

Monitoring of food prices and market functionality in and around camps to ensure affordability and access.

Expand food aid coverage to reach the most vulnerable,

particularly those unable to produce or purchase sufficient food.

2. Livelihood Recovery Needs:

The persistence of agriculture and rise in informal trades suggest potential entry points for livelihood support, especially in skill-building and microenterprise development.

Livelihood support and cash-based interventions to improve household purchasing power.

3. Community-Based Health Services:

Subsidize healthcare for IDPs through donor support, vouchers, or private sector partnerships to ensure access to quality care without financial hardship.

Expand mobile healthcare services to improve access in hard-to-reach displacement settings and reduce reliance on unsafe health practices.

4. Resilience and Coping Mechanisms:

Promote community-based protection, social cohesion, and psychosocial support by building on existing coping strategies.

Integrate resilience-building into emergency and recovery efforts to strengthen long-term self-reliance among displaced populations.

5. Educational Access and Skills Development:

Develop tailored education programs that combine literacy, and technical training to prepare displaced populations for sustainable livelihoods.

Increase access to vocational and tertiary education to equip displaced individuals with skills for formal employment and self-reliance.

LIMITATIONS

- The findings presented in this report represent weighted results, and due to rounding off, some percentages may be slightly above or below (+/-1%) 100 per cent.
- The results in this report represent a 95 per cent confidence level with a 5 per cent margin of error at the state level (Admin II).