

Why International Child Protection Norms Fail: Administrative Classification and the Protection of Internally Displaced Children in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite Nigeria's obligations under international and regional child protection instruments, internally displaced children continue to face substantial barriers to the fulfilment of their rights. This study examines how administrative classification shapes child protection outcomes at the New Kuchingoro internally displaced persons (IDP) settlement in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews with officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), interviews with camp leaders, focus group discussions with parents and adolescents, and non-participant observation of living conditions. The analysis is informed by path dependency theory to explain how historical planning decisions and subsequent institutional choices shape the settlement's continued status as an informal IDP site. The findings identify four interrelated mechanisms that constrain child protection: administrative invisibility associated with the settlement's lack of formal recognition; institutional fragmentation arising from overlapping mandates and unclear responsibilities; prolonged developmental harm linked to inadequate healthcare, housing, water, and secondary education; and governance exclusion, whereby children's awareness of their rights is not matched by accessible mechanisms for claiming them. These findings suggest that child protection gaps cannot be explained solely by limited institutional capacity; they must also be understood in relation to administrative classification and historically embedded governance arrangements. The study recommends formal recognition and adequate support for IDP settlements or the provision of viable integration pathways, dedicated funding for child welfare, stronger interagency coordination, more geographically balanced humanitarian assistance, and a review of FCT planning practices. By linking administrative classification to the implementation of child protection norms, this study contributes to debates on displacement governance and the institutional conditions shaping children's rights.

Keywords: Administrative Classification; Child Protection; Internally Displaced Children; Path Dependency; Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement remains one of the major humanitarian and governance challenges confronting states, particularly where prolonged displacement intersects with institutional weaknesses and unequal access to public services. Nigeria continues to experience large-scale internal displacement, particularly in its northeastern states. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2025) estimated that approximately 2.29 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were living in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, and Taraba as of May 2025. Insurgency-related violence, particularly that associated with Boko Haram, has been a major driver of displacement and insecurity in the country (Braimah et al., 2024). Children constitute a particularly vulnerable population within this context because displacement can disrupt their access to education, healthcare, safe housing, and other essential services. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), children under the age of eighteen account for more than half of the internally displaced population in northeastern Nigeria. These circumstances make the protection of displaced children not only a humanitarian concern but also a test of the state's capacity to translate legal commitments into accessible and effective public protection.

Nigeria has established a substantial legal framework for the protection of children's rights through international, regional, and domestic instruments. These include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by Nigeria in 1991; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), ratified in 2001; the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, commonly known as the Kampala Convention, ratified by Nigeria in 2012; and the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003 (African Union, 2009; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003; United Nations, 1989). However, the existence of legal instruments does not necessarily guarantee their effective implementation. Research on the implementation of the CRA identifies persistent gaps between formal legal commitments and the practical enforcement of children's rights in Nigeria (Akuchie & Akuchie, 2023; Ihekerenma et al., 2023; Ikpeze & Oti-Onyeama, 2021; Ndana & Abdulrahman, 2020). Similarly, studies of international norms show that the adoption of formal commitments does not automatically produce corresponding institutional practices, as domestic actors may interpret and adapt norms according to existing institutional arrangements (Acharya, 2004). The central issue, therefore, is not only whether protective norms have been adopted, but also how administrative institutions interpret, prioritise, and implement them in specific local contexts.

Existing research has examined the humanitarian needs of displaced populations in Nigeria, including inadequate healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene services (Kusimo, 2019; Owoaje et al., 2016), barriers to education (Ezera & Oghenede, 2021; Elegbede et al., 2024), and broader challenges associated with the protection of displaced people (Lwabukuna, 2021; Masajuwa, 2020). Studies have also identified weaknesses in interagency coordination and the provision of services to IDPs (Adio-Moses et al., 2020; Likeing & Aleh, 2024). Nevertheless, the existing literature has concentrated substantially on displacement in northeastern Nigeria or on particular dimensions of displaced populations' welfare, leaving the everyday administrative processes affecting displaced children in other locations comparatively underexamined (Olusegun & Ogunfolu, 2019). This limitation matters because the realisation of children's rights depends not only on the formal content of legal instruments or the availability of resources, but also on how public institutions classify populations, assign responsibilities, and determine eligibility for assistance. Although scholarship on norm localisation explains how international norms interact with domestic institutional contexts (Acharya, 2004), further investigation is needed into how administrative classifications may constrain the implementation of already adopted child protection commitments.

New Kuchingoro, an internally displaced settlement in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), provides an important setting in which to investigate this problem. The settlement was established by families who fled Boko Haram's takeover of Gwoza in Borno State in 2014 and is located near Games Village in Abuja. Previous studies have documented the presence and living conditions of displaced populations in Nigeria, including communities whose needs may not be adequately



addressed through existing protection arrangements (Kusimo, 2019; Masajuwa, 2020). New Kuchingoro reportedly accommodates more than 1,500 residents, yet its long-standing status as an informal settlement raises questions about its administrative recognition and access to sustained public support. The case also needs to be situated within the planning history of Abuja. The city's 1979 Master Plan established a framework for the planned development of the capital, while more recent research has examined how planning legacies and institutional decisions shape the governance of urban informal settlements in Abuja (Adu-Ampong & Aceska, 2024). This historical context provides a basis for investigating whether planning practices and administrative classifications have influenced how the needs and rights of displaced families, particularly children, are recognised and addressed. The relationship between New Kuchingoro's informal status and the implementation of child protection obligations, however, must be examined through the experiences of residents and the practices of the institutions responsible for providing protection.

Against this background, this study investigates how administrative classification shapes the implementation of child protection norms at New Kuchingoro. Rather than treating the gap between legal commitments and actual protection solely as a problem of institutional capacity or insufficient resources, the study examines how the administrative status of a displaced settlement may influence recognition, interagency coordination, resource allocation, and children's opportunities to claim their rights. Path dependency theory provides the analytical perspective for examining how historical planning decisions and subsequent institutional choices may reproduce administrative arrangements over time (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000). The study addresses three research questions:

1. To what extent do the living conditions of children in New Kuchingoro align with the child protection standards established by the UNCRC, the ACRWC, the Kampala Convention, and Nigeria's Child Rights Act?
2. What administrative mechanisms shape the implementation of these child protection standards in New Kuchingoro?
3. What do these mechanisms reveal about the relationship between the formal adoption of international child protection norms and the practical realisation of children's rights?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to research on child protection and displacement governance by examining the role of administrative classification in shaping the implementation of legal commitments at the local level. Its empirical focus on New Kuchingoro offers insight into how historical planning arrangements, institutional responsibilities, and administrative recognition may interact to influence the protection available to displaced children. The remainder of the article reviews the relevant literature, outlines the theoretical framework and research methodology, presents the findings through four interrelated mechanisms, discusses their implications for existing scholarship, and concludes with policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internally Displaced Persons

An internally displaced person (IDP) is somebody who has been driven out of their home as a result of conflict, violence, or natural disaster but remains inside their country of origin and therefore does not cross into another country (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] cited in Lwabukuna 2021). Because an IDP's country of origin is also the responsible authority for the IDP, Lwabukuna (2021) describes this relationship as a "protection paradox" with the authorities being either unable or unwilling to provide protection; these two scenarios are usually linked. Internally displaced children, individuals less than 18 years old (as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] and the Child Rights Act [CRA], have what Simon (2021) refers to as "double vulnerability", i.e., both displacement and dependent status.

International Convention

International conventions are an example of treaties that obligate countries that have ratified them (Sangroula, 2010). This study focuses on three international conventions concerning displaced children in Nigeria. They include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which addresses issues specific to children's rights in Africa (Elensom & Amanawa, 2024); and the Kampala Convention (African Union, 2009), the first international agreement specifically designed to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide. In Nigeria, it was through the Children's Rights Act (CRA), enacted in 2003 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003), that child welfare protections were implemented domestically. The CRA was subject to both national and local legislation and required state-level ratification, completed by at least twenty-one of thirty-six states (Ikpeze & Oti-Onyeama, 2021). Additionally, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the capital city, Abuja, automatically falls under federal jurisdiction, making New Kuchingoro a useful site for isolating implementation failure from non-ratification. Protracted displacement describes situations, typically spanning years, in which none of the recognised durable solutions, return, integration, or resettlement, is achieved (Crawford, Cosgrave, Haysom & Walicki, 2015; IASC, 2010); after over a decade, New Kuchingoro meets this definition.

International Norm Implementation

Scholarship on International Norms, in particular, has demonstrated that domestic actors do not simply accept foreign norms and practice them as adopted. Rather, they adapt or localise them to fit the prior institutional and cognitive frameworks of their countries. A process Acharya (2004) termed "norm localisation" illustrates how this occurs. Literature on international norms provides insights into why states ratify treaties and agreements they do not enforce entirely. However, this body of scholarship is primarily focused on when and where states enter into new international commitments rather than what occurs after the initial stage of "norm adoption" and before all forms of localised adaptation have stalled due to an unchanged administrative structure. This study draws upon Path Dependency Theory in order to address this limitation. Other literature documenting Nigeria's implementation of the Child Rights Act (CRA) identifies a significant and consistent gap between the Nigerian government's commitment to enacting laws protecting children's rights and the effective enforcement of those rights. In addition, studies such as Ndana and Abdulrahman (2020); Ihekerenma, Solomon, & Samson, (2023) provide descriptions of CRA implementation as weak, while Akuchie and Akuchie (2023) demonstrate that Nigeria's most substantial barrier to implementing child protection laws is not a lack of laws to protect children but the transition from law to administrative action. The Nigerian literature also demonstrates that there is a gap between legislative commitment to enact and enforce laws designed to protect children and the actual effectiveness of such laws.

Child Protection in Displacement

Empirical review of literature provides a substantial amount of evidence about how Nigerian displaced children have been deprived of their basic rights for instance; inadequate healthcare and water, sanitation, and hygiene access (Owoaje, Uchendu, Ajayi & Cadmus, 2016; Kusimo, 2019), unmet educational needs (Ezera & Oghenede, 2021; Elegbede, Adedotun, Lapite, Idhalama & Aluede, 2024), and are at risk of being exploited through unsafe environments such as the unregulated religious schools that mimic Boko Haram's recruitment methods. Olusegun and Ogunfolu (2019) note that existing literature concentrates almost exclusively on the northeast conflict zone, leaving displaced children elsewhere, including in the FCT, comparatively understudied.

Displacement Governance and Institutional Fragmentation

The separate strand of investigates the institutional framework of Nigeria's response to internally displaced persons. The authors Onuk, Adibe and Babauamma (2023) and Magaji (2023) describe the incomplete ratification of the Kampala Convention by Nigeria. Authors Adio-Moses, Abiodun and Fasaanu (2020) and Likeing and Aleh (2024) describe the inadequate coordination between agencies responsible for delivering services to internally displaced persons. Authors



Adeyanju, Adeyanju and Ogunseye (2023) conclude that restrictions imposed upon international organisations attempting to deliver services constitute violations of their obligation to assist the Kampala Convention. While Adu-Ampong and Aceska (2024) do not examine the exact subject matter as this study, they do illustrate that in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, certain events and processes during the early years of planning have led to the creation of informal settlements, such that today there are many areas in which the government does not view as legitimate for inclusion in service planning, or for allocation of funding and protection responsibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internally Displaced Persons

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes, particularly as a result of armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, without crossing an internationally recognised state border. Unlike refugees, IDPs remain within their country of origin and therefore continue to fall primarily under the responsibility of their own government. This arrangement creates a protection paradox: the state responsible for protecting displaced populations may itself lack the capacity or willingness to provide adequate protection (Lwabukuna, 2021). Consequently, displacement does not simply involve the loss of a place of residence; it may also disrupt access to public services, livelihoods, education, healthcare, and mechanisms for claiming legal rights.

Children experience particular challenges in displacement settings because their dependence on adults and institutions may limit their ability to secure protection independently. Their vulnerability may be intensified by disrupted education, inadequate healthcare, unsafe living environments, and limited participation in decisions affecting their welfare. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Nigeria's Child Rights Act (CRA) define a child as a person below the age of eighteen, subject to the applicable legal provisions (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003; United Nations, 1989). The concept of double vulnerability is useful for understanding how children's age and displacement status may interact to intensify their exposure to protection risks (Simon, 2021). This perspective directs attention not only to children's immediate material needs but also to the institutional arrangements through which their rights are recognised and fulfilled.

In the Nigerian context, the protection of internally displaced children must therefore be considered in relation to both their specific developmental needs and the state's responsibility to provide protection without discrimination. Research has documented challenges affecting displaced populations, including inadequate access to basic services and difficulties in securing effective protection (Kusimo, 2019; Lwabukuna, 2021; Masajuwa, 2020). However, the existence of these vulnerabilities does not, by itself, explain why protection may remain inadequate over an extended period. Understanding this problem requires examining the legal frameworks governing children's rights alongside the administrative practices that determine how displaced children are identified, supported, and included in public service provision.

International Conventions and Domestic Child Protection Frameworks

International conventions establish legal obligations for states that become parties to them, although the scope and domestic implementation of those obligations depend on the relevant legal framework (Sangroula, 2010). Three instruments are particularly relevant to the protection of displaced children in Nigeria: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, commonly known as the Kampala Convention. The UNCRC establishes a comprehensive framework for children's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (United Nations, 1989). The ACRWC addresses children's rights within the African regional context, including concerns associated with their protection and welfare (Elensom & Amanawa, 2024). The Kampala Convention specifically

addresses the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa and provides a regional framework for state responsibilities toward displaced populations (African Union, 2009).

In Nigeria, the Child Rights Act of 2003 provides a domestic legal framework for the protection and welfare of children (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). Nevertheless, the relationship between national legislation and state-level implementation requires careful consideration. Research on the CRA identifies variations and challenges in its adoption and enforcement across Nigeria, demonstrating that the existence of national legislation does not automatically ensure uniform implementation throughout the country (Akuchie & Akuchie, 2023; Ikpeze & Oti-Onyeama, 2021; Ndana & Abdulrahman, 2020). These challenges raise questions about how legal commitments are translated into practical protection, particularly for children whose circumstances require coordination among multiple government institutions.

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where Abuja and New Kuchingoro are located, provides a significant setting for examining the relationship between legal commitments and administrative practice. However, the legal and institutional status of the FCT should not be treated as sufficient evidence that all relevant protections have been implemented. Rather, the case offers an opportunity to investigate how responsibilities are interpreted and exercised by the institutions involved in the protection of displaced children. The distinction between the adoption of a legal instrument, its incorporation into domestic law, and its practical implementation is central to this inquiry. Research on the Kampala Convention and the protection of IDPs in Nigeria similarly identifies concerns about the domestic legal and institutional arrangements required to give effect to protection commitments (Magaji, 2023; Onuk et al., 2023).

A related concept is protracted displacement, which refers to situations in which displaced populations remain unable to achieve durable solutions, including voluntary return, local integration, or settlement elsewhere, for an extended period (Crawford et al., 2015; Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC], 2010). Protracted displacement is important to this study because prolonged uncertainty can extend children's exposure to inadequate services and constrain their developmental opportunities. Where displacement persists for more than a decade, as reported in the case of New Kuchingoro, the central question extends beyond immediate humanitarian assistance to the institutional arrangements that sustain or alleviate long-term deprivation. The study consequently examines whether administrative recognition and institutional responsibility influence the practical realisation of the rights established by international, regional, and domestic instruments.

International Norm Implementation

Scholarship on international norm implementation demonstrates that states do not necessarily translate international commitments directly into domestic practice. Instead, domestic institutions and political actors may interpret, adapt, or localise international norms according to existing institutional arrangements and understandings. Acharya (2004) describes this process as *norm localisation*, emphasising the role of domestic actors in adapting external norms to local contexts. This perspective is useful for explaining why the adoption of international standards does not always produce consistent changes in administrative behaviour. The gap between formal commitments and practical outcomes may reflect not only resistance to international norms but also the institutional arrangements through which those norms are interpreted and applied.

In Nigeria, research on the implementation of the Child Rights Act identifies persistent difficulties in translating legislative commitments into effective protection. Ndana and Abdulrahman (2020) and Ihekerenma et al. (2023) discuss weaknesses in the implementation and enforcement of children's rights, while Akuchie and Akuchie (2023) highlight the challenges associated with moving from legal provisions to administrative action. Ikpeze and Oti-Onyeama (2021) also examine the effectiveness of the CRA and the challenges surrounding its application in the Nigerian context. Taken together, these studies indicate that the existence of a legal framework should not be equated with the consistent delivery of protection. However, identifying an implementation gap is only the starting point; further analysis is required to explain how particular institutional arrangements reproduce or intensify that gap in specific locations.

This study extends the discussion by focusing on the administrative processes that operate after legal commitments have been adopted. Whereas norm localisation explains how international norms interact with domestic institutional contexts (Acharya, 2004), it does not, on its own, fully explain why particular administrative arrangements may persist even when they are associated with continuing protection deficits. Path dependency theory provides an additional analytical perspective by directing attention to the influence of earlier decisions on subsequent institutional choices and the persistence of established arrangements (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000). From this perspective, the implementation of child protection norms may be shaped by historical decisions, administrative categories, and institutional routines that influence which populations are recognised, which agencies assume responsibility, and how public resources are allocated.

Applied to New Kuchingoro, this perspective raises the possibility that the implementation gap is not simply a consequence of weak general capacity. It may also reflect the way in which the settlement is classified and positioned within existing planning and administrative systems. If administrative recognition affects whether a population is incorporated into formal service provision, then the classification of a settlement may influence how legal obligations are translated into practical protection. This proposition provides the conceptual link between international norm implementation and the study's examination of administrative classification. It remains an empirical question, however, whether and how such classification operates in New Kuchingoro; the relationship must be established through evidence from residents and the institutions responsible for displacement governance.

Child Protection in Displacement

Empirical research on displacement in Nigeria documents substantial challenges in the provision of basic services to displaced populations. Studies have reported problems involving healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene, all of which are important to the health and well-being of children in displacement settings (Kusimo, 2019; Owoaje et al., 2016). Educational access is another major concern. Ezera and Oghenede (2021) examine barriers to education for children in IDP camps, while Elegbede et al. (2024) review the potential role of technology in improving educational access for displaced children. These studies demonstrate that the consequences of displacement extend beyond immediate insecurity and may affect children's educational continuity, health, and development over time.

The protection environment may also expose displaced children to additional safety risks. Inadequate institutional oversight and limited access to protective services can complicate efforts to identify, prevent, and respond to exploitation. Such risks should be examined in relation to the particular circumstances of each settlement rather than assumed to occur uniformly across all displacement settings. More broadly, the available literature suggests that children's protection depends on the interaction of material conditions, service availability, institutional oversight, and access to mechanisms through which their concerns can be addressed.

Despite these contributions, the geographical concentration of research on northeastern Nigeria leaves other displacement contexts comparatively underexamined. Olusegun and Ogunfolu (2019) identify the limited attention given to displaced children outside the principal conflict-affected areas. This gap is relevant to New Kuchingoro because its location within the FCT places it within a distinct administrative and urban planning environment. The settlement provides an opportunity to investigate whether challenges documented elsewhere in Nigeria also arise in the capital territory and, if so, how local administrative arrangements shape their persistence. The present study therefore connects the documented service needs of displaced children with the institutional processes through which those needs are recognised and addressed.

Displacement Governance and Institutional Fragmentation

The governance of internal displacement involves multiple institutions with responsibilities for emergency response, displacement management, welfare provision, and the protection of rights. Effective protection consequently depends not only on the mandates of individual agencies but also on coordination, clear allocation of responsibilities, and accountability for outcomes.

Research on Nigeria's emergency response system identifies challenges in interagency collaboration, including difficulties in coordinating institutional action (Adio-Moses et al., 2020). More recent work also identifies obstacles to service provision for IDPs, highlighting the continuing difficulties faced by displaced populations in accessing assistance (Likeing & Aleh, 2024). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of displacement governance depends on how institutional mandates are translated into coordinated services at the point where displaced populations live.

Institutional fragmentation may become particularly consequential when the responsibilities of several agencies overlap or when no institution assumes clear responsibility for a specific population or settlement. In such circumstances, the existence of multiple agencies does not necessarily guarantee comprehensive protection. Instead, unclear responsibilities may complicate referrals, delay assistance, and weaken accountability for unmet needs. This concern is consistent with research that identifies coordination as an important challenge in Nigeria's emergency response and IDP service provision (Adio-Moses et al., 2020; Likeing & Aleh, 2024). Questions concerning the domestication and implementation of the Kampala Convention further demonstrate the importance of examining the institutional and legal arrangements through which protection obligations are operationalised (Magaji, 2023; Onuk et al., 2023).

The governance of displacement is also connected to urban planning and the administrative recognition of settlements. Adu-Ampong and Aceska (2024) examine the relationship between critical junctures, path dependency, and the governance of informal settlements in Abuja. Their work provides a relevant perspective for understanding how historical planning decisions may shape the treatment of settlements within the FCT. Applied to New Kuchingoro, this perspective raises questions about whether the distinction between formally recognised and informal settlements affects institutional responsibility, service planning, and the allocation of public resources. However, the specific consequences of this relationship for child protection require direct empirical investigation rather than being inferred from urban planning research alone.

The present study brings these strands of literature together by examining administrative classification as a possible link between historical institutional arrangements and the implementation of child protection norms. Existing research has separately documented children's service needs, weaknesses in legal implementation, challenges in interagency coordination, and the historical governance of informal settlements (Adu-Ampong & Aceska, 2024; Akuchie & Akuchie, 2023; Ezera & Oghenede, 2021; Likeing & Aleh, 2024). Less clear is how these dimensions interact in a specific displacement setting to shape whether children's rights are realised in everyday administrative practice. By focusing on New Kuchingoro, this study investigates the relationship between administrative recognition, institutional coordination, access to essential services, and children's opportunities to claim their rights. Path dependency theory is used to examine how historical decisions and subsequent institutional practices may sustain these conditions over time. The analysis therefore seeks to contribute to displacement governance scholarship by explaining not only what protection gaps exist, but also how administrative arrangements may help reproduce them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Path Dependency Theory

Path dependency theory explains how institutional arrangements emerge from earlier decisions and persist over time, even when their consequences become problematic or when alternative arrangements appear more appropriate. A central concept in this theory is the *critical juncture*, a period in which decisions made under particular historical conditions establish an institutional trajectory that subsequently becomes difficult to reverse (David, 1985; Pierson, 2000). The long-term consequences of these decisions may differ substantially from the intentions or priorities that initially motivated them. Once an institutional path has been established, self-reinforcing mechanisms—including established administrative procedures, budgetary allocations, organisational mandates, and accumulated policy expectations—can increase the costs of

changing direction. These mechanisms produce institutional *lock-in*, whereby existing arrangements persist despite evidence of their limitations (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000).

Path dependency does not imply that institutional change is impossible. Rather, it emphasises that change is conditioned by the historical sequence of decisions and the institutional arrangements that develop around them. Although subsequent legislation, policy reforms, or external pressures may challenge an established trajectory, such developments do not necessarily transform existing practices. Substantial change may require a new critical juncture or deliberate intervention capable of disrupting the mechanisms that reproduce the established institutional path (Collier & Collier, 1991; Mahoney, 2000). This perspective is particularly relevant to displacement governance because formal commitments to protect displaced populations may coexist with administrative practices that continue to determine who is recognised, which locations qualify for assistance, and which institutions are responsible for service provision.

Application of Path Dependency Theory to New Kuchingoro

This study applies path dependency theory to examine how historical planning decisions and subsequent government responses have contributed to the continued informal administrative status of the New Kuchingoro internally displaced persons (IDP) settlement in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. Three historically significant junctures are examined: the adoption of Abuja's 1979 Master Plan, the establishment and initial administrative treatment of New Kuchingoro in 2014–2015, and the reported shift in displacement programming during 2016–2017. These junctures are treated as an analytical sequence through which to investigate institutional continuity, rather than as critical junctures whose long-term effects are assumed in advance.

The first juncture concerns the adoption of Abuja's 1979 Master Plan, which established a state-led vision for the planned development of the capital. Subsequent approaches to urban planning and informal settlements have been examined in relation to the enduring influence of this planning framework (Abuja Master Plan, 1979; Adu-Ampong & Aceska, 2024). For this study, the relevant question is whether and how the distinction between formally planned urban space and informal settlement has shaped the administrative recognition of New Kuchingoro. The analysis therefore considers the extent to which planning priorities have influenced decisions concerning the settlement's status and the provision of services to its residents.

The second juncture concerns the establishment of New Kuchingoro in 2014 and the government's subsequent response. According to Camp Official 1 (2026), after the population was registered in October 2014, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reportedly assured camp leaders that a permanent camp would be established by February 2015, with access to water, a school, and a clinic. However, following a meeting arranged by the National Human Rights Commission in May 2015, residents were reportedly informed that the Federal Government would not permit official IDP camps in the FCT and were encouraged to return to their states of origin (Camp Official 1, 2026). This sequence is analytically important because it suggests a possible divergence between the initial expectation of formal assistance and the subsequent administrative position. The study examines whether this divergence contributed to a pattern in which the settlement continued to accommodate displaced residents without receiving the institutional recognition and services associated with formal IDP arrangements.

The third juncture concerns developments during 2016–2017. Interviews with FEMA Official 2 (2026) and NCFRMI Official 1 (2026) indicate that the Federal Government instructed international donor organisations to redirect displacement programmes towards northeastern Nigeria. If corroborated by further documentary or institutional evidence, this reported shift may help explain how geographical priorities in humanitarian programming affected the availability of assistance in other locations, including New Kuchingoro. The analytical issue is not simply whether resources were redirected, but whether this decision reinforced an existing pattern of limited recognition and support for displaced populations living outside the principal areas of humanitarian intervention.

Taken together, these three junctures provide a framework for investigating how planning priorities, administrative decisions, and geographical funding preferences may have reinforced the informal status of New Kuchingoro. The study conceptualises **administrative classification** as a potential mechanism through which this institutional trajectory is reproduced: the way a settlement and its residents are categorised may influence their eligibility for assistance, the allocation of institutional responsibilities, and access to essential services. The resulting institutional continuity may contribute to gaps between formal child protection commitments and the practical fulfilment of children's rights.

Path dependency theory therefore guides the analysis of how historical decisions shape present-day administrative practices and how those practices may affect internally displaced children. Specifically, it directs attention to the relationship between settlement recognition, institutional coordination, access to essential services, and the availability of mechanisms through which children and their families can claim protection. The theory does not, by itself, establish that planning decisions caused specific child protection outcomes. Rather, it provides an explanatory framework for examining the historical and institutional processes through which administrative classification may contribute to persistent protection gaps.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine institutional practices and the experiences of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in a contemporary, real-world context (Yin, 2018). New Kuchingoro, located in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, was selected as the case study site because it is described as one of the longest-established IDP settlements in the FCT. Its continued existence provided an opportunity to investigate how government policies, administrative arrangements, and institutional responses shape the protection of internally displaced children. The case study approach enabled the researchers to examine the relationship between formal child protection commitments and the conditions experienced by displaced children and their families within a specific institutional and geographical context.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised parents or guardians, camp officials, and adolescents who had resided in New Kuchingoro for at least five years, as well as key informants from the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and the FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The accessible population was reported as 2,268 individuals across the three institutional and residential categories presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Accessible study population by institution.

Institution / Group	Population
National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI)	579
FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	116
New Kuchingoro Camp residents	1,537
Total accessible population	2,232

Eighteen participants were purposively selected from four participant categories, as shown in Table 2. The selection was intended to capture different perspectives on displacement governance, institutional responsibilities, living conditions, and child protection. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with relevant experiences or knowledge of the research problem (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Snowball sampling was also employed, whereby initial participants recommended other individuals who met the study's eligibility criteria.

Table 2: Sample size distribution by participant category.

Participant Category	Sample Size
Parents / guardians	6
Adolescents, aged 13-17	6
Camp leadership (New Kuchingoro)	2



Participant Category	Sample Size
Government officials (NCFRMI and FEMA)	4
Total sample	18

The final sample comprised 18 participants. The study reports that the sample size was guided by data saturation, understood as the point at which additional data collection no longer generated substantially new information relevant to the research questions (Padgett, 2013). The adequacy of the sample was considered in relation to the qualitative design and the depth of information obtained from the different participant categories.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three methods: key-informant interviews, focus group discussions, and non-participant observation. Key-informant interviews were conducted with government officials from FEMA and NCFRMI and with leaders of the New Kuchingoro settlement. These interviews explored institutional responsibilities, administrative decisions, displacement management, and the provision of support and protection for displaced children.

Focus group discussions were conducted separately with parents or guardians and adolescents. These discussions explored participants' experiences of displacement, access to essential services, perceptions of child protection, and challenges encountered in their daily lives. Separating the two groups enabled the researchers to consider the perspectives of adults and adolescents independently.

Non-participant observation was used to document the physical and social conditions of the settlement. The observations focused on shelters, learning environments, and water and sanitation facilities. These observations provided contextual information that could be compared with accounts obtained through interviews and focus group discussions.

Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling based on their relevance to the study. The inclusion criterion for resident participants was a minimum of five years of residence in New Kuchingoro, while government officials and camp leaders were selected because of their institutional or community roles. The combination of participant categories and data collection methods was intended to provide multiple perspectives on the relationship between administrative arrangements and child protection.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of potential themes, review of themes against the coded data, definition and naming of themes, and production of the analytical narrative. The analysis followed an inductive approach, allowing themes to be developed from participants' accounts and observational data rather than being determined entirely in advance by the theoretical framework.

Following the initial thematic analysis, the identified themes were examined in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), and Nigeria's Child's Rights Act (CRA). This comparison was intended to assess the relationship between the reported experiences of displaced children, the protection standards established by these instruments, and the institutional arrangements described by participants. The analysis focused on identifying potential gaps between formal protection commitments and their practical implementation. Any conclusion concerning a specific legal breach requires consideration of the relevant provision, its applicability, and the supporting empirical evidence.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the appropriate Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was obtained from adult participants. For participants under the age of 18, parental or guardian consent and the adolescents' own assent were obtained before participation. The study reports that a camp leader supervised the process involving adolescent participants.



Confidentiality was maintained by identifying participants through role-based labels and numerical identifiers rather than personal names. This approach was applied to government officials, camp leaders, parents or guardians, and adolescent participants. Given the involvement of minors and the potentially sensitive circumstances of displacement, the protection of participants' identities and the confidential handling of their accounts were important considerations throughout the research process.

Trustworthiness of the Research

The trustworthiness of the findings was supported through triangulation of key-informant interviews, focus group discussions, and non-participant observation. Information provided by government officials and camp leaders was compared with the accounts of residents and the conditions documented during observation. This comparison enabled the researchers to identify convergences and differences across sources rather than relying on a single account of events.

Credibility was addressed by comparing evidence from different participant groups and data collection methods. Dependability was supported by using a consistent core of research questions and a systematic thematic analysis procedure. Confirmability was strengthened by grounding the themes in participants' accounts and observational evidence rather than relying solely on the researchers' prior assumptions or theoretical expectations. Together, these procedures were intended to strengthen the transparency and credibility of the interpretation of the data.

RESULTS

Administrative Invisibility

New Kuchingoro's foundation demonstrates how its classification was both created and challenged from the start. Leadership at New Kuchingoro stated that a small population of displaced people had been forced to flee their homes in Gwoza by earlier Boko Haram raid activity and settled quietly with host communities between 2011-2012. Government officials did not know about this group until October 2014 when they were alerted by a local church which had conducted evangelism outreach in the area and found a larger number of people than anticipated (Camp Official 1, 2026). NEMA registered the population, promised a dedicated camp with water, school, and clinic by February 2015, but did not keep their promise. In May of 2015, there was another meeting called through the National Human Rights Commission where residents were told the federal government would not allow for a formal camp to be established in the FCT and they should return to their states of origin (Camp Official 1, 2026).

A decade after the settlement was created, the governmental entities responsible for providing services to residents of New Kuchingoro still do not agree on what they call the community. FEMA officials stated unequivocally that they consider it to be a settlement and not an IDP camp, citing the fact that the FCT Administration prohibits camps at all in Abuja (FEMA Official 1, 2026). On the other hand, a representative of the NCFRMI stated that New Kuchingoro is one of eighteen IDP locations which were officially designated by the federal government, but she also acknowledged it is not a formal or organised camp, as she said: "no one is in charge." As there are no camps formally identified, no person is appointed to coordinate the camp services. One of the FEMA officials indicated that she conducted outreach efforts without having her own office to operate out of, which a formally built camp would have (FEMA official 2, 2026).

The reasons why officials insist that the FCT cannot allow formal camps are because of the Abuja Master Plan, which established the capital as a highly structured and administratively designed city. Later, FCT practice has frequently treated anything outside approved layouts as planning problems. Since New Kuchingoro does not fit into the recognised layout plan of the capital, it is excluded from planning for camp coordination, service delivery and budgeting for long-term solutions despite its residents' entitlement under law to such protections.

The consequences of not resolving this classification issue have the greatest negative impact on the health care delivery system. Camp officials explained that there is a referral process established by FEMA for IDPs to receive medical treatment at either Asokoro or Wuse General Hospitals; however, when the patient's hospital records indicated they were an IDP, treatment

would collapse, and the patient would be directed to obtain their own medication and needles regardless of whether they had a valid referral (Camp Official 2, 2026). The Chairman also noted a resident who held one of these letters was moved around to departmental offices in the hospitals until he died in his wheelchair, before receiving any attention (Camp Official 1, 2026). A separate case involved camp officials rushing a seriously ill child to another hospital due to National Hospital staff stating they did not have available room; fortunately, the child survived because the camp officials simply abandoned the referral letter and paid for the treatment themselves (Camp Official 2, 2026). It was the administrative designation assigned to a patient's file that ultimately determined whether care would be provided.

The living situation reflects the same invisibility. Families make their own housing out of nylon sheeting and wood. There have been at least five displacement events within the settlement because land owners want to build on that property (Camp Official 2, 2026; Parent 1, 2026). In some instances, children were in class when the evictions occurred, so a teacher stopped the lesson to let them know that their houses were being demolished (Parent 2, 2026). Not once has an agency provided families with materials to build shelter. A Senior FEMA Officer stated that the settlement was "worse than a slum" (FEMA Official 2, 2026). Many children are suffering from stomach problems since there has never been any testing done by any agency to determine if the water supply is safe. (Parent 1, 2026; Camp Official 2, 2026)

Institutional Fragmentation and Resource Allocation

The responsibilities for New Kuchingoro are split between two main organisations; however, these organisations and the people living at New Kuchingoro have an unclear view as to which organisation is responsible for what. The emergency phase of the disaster at New Kuchingoro was overseen by FEMA, while the durable solution phase is managed through the Care and Maintenance Unit of NCFRMI. A senior staff member from NCFRMI made it clear that they do not encourage building camps, but FEMA favours encampment (NCFRMI Official 1, 2026). As a result of these ambiguous overlaps, there are duplicated efforts by these two agencies; for instance, each conducts its own profiling and rarely shares information regarding their results, and although one of the FEMA representatives suggested conducting a bi-weekly interagency debrief meeting, it has never occurred (FEMA Official 2, 2026).

The officials were unable to point out a budget line dedicated specifically to displaced children. In most cases, the needs of children are often funded through "disaster relief" allocations. There was a time when there was a specific fund to cover healthcare expenses related to the FCT displaced communities. The fund began with approximately ₦2 million but was continually increased as the cost of providing the services continued to increase. However, this fund was discontinued and did not include formal notification regarding its discontinuance. An employee of FEMA remembered receiving an informal communication regarding the fund and further stated that she received no information about why the funding was ended (FEMA Official 2, 2026). A child resident with sickle cell disease has relied since childhood on his mother's earnings and periodic community contributions to fund treatment, with no government health scheme ever covering his care (Parent 1, 2026).

Where funds do exist, approval procedures usually go past the need they are meant to address. A FEMA official described an internal approval chain where the director had signing authority up to ₦200,000, while the Coordinator had signing authority up to ₦4.5 million; after that it would have to go directly to the minister, by which point, she noted, children would already be sitting for exams (FEMA Official 2, 2026). An NCFRMI official offered a similar account of the procurement process, noting that implementation depends entirely on when funds are released, a point she identified as where progress typically stalls (NCFRMI Official 2, 2026).

The regulatory environment for NGOs operating in the settlement shifted at the same juncture that was identified in the theoretical framework. Before 2017, all organisations were required to register with FEMA before they could be active in the camp. In addition to registration, FEMA reserved the right to refer any unregistered actor to the Department of State Services (FEMA

Official 2, 2026). Following the 2016-17 Federal policy decision that redirected International Donors to the Northeast region, many larger agencies withdrew from the region, and the verification process became largely non-enforced (FEMA Official 2, 2026). Today, a significant portion of responsibility for the physical welfare of residents is assumed by smaller NGOs, churches and individuals who donate money with minimal oversight.

Protracted Displacement and Educational Deprivation

The local school is run as a volunteer effort. It serves Pre-Nursery through Primary Five, with 8 classrooms that serve 388 students (Camp Official 2, 2026). In 2018, UBE requested the delivery of Curriculum Materials/Textbooks but never received them. Also, in 2018, a request for volunteer teachers to help support the school was again not answered (Camp Official 2, 2026). When NCFRMI came in to renovate the school building, the intervention was limited to installing new ceilings and painting the walls. Another visit to provide the students with laptops ended, according to camp leadership, with the laptops taken back once pictures had been taken (Camp Official 2, 2026). School uniforms have been donated by NGOs at least twice in the past ten-plus years. Otherwise, the parents purchase a sample of the required uniform and then take it back home and get it sewn together themselves (Camp Official 2, 2026).

Beyond primary five, there are no other education options available in the settlement itself, and access to them outside is expensive. The camp leadership and the parents separately estimate that secondary school enrollment costs around ₦100,000 along with daily transportation costs of ₦1,800 dependent upon where the school is located (Camp Official 2, 2026; Parent 2, 2026). One adolescent mentioned that her mother would have to cross rivers to collect wood to sell as a means to get money to pay for transportation and stated that when she didn't have money, she would walk to school (IDP Child 1, 2026). In one family in the focus group, out of three school-aged children, only two were currently attending secondary school. The oldest child could not afford to take a re-sit for his WAEC exam last year after he failed it the first time (Parent 2, 2026).

In spite of these restrictions on opportunity, many of the adolescents interviewed expressed ambitions and articulated paths to achieve them informally. Some examples included: being trained as a mechanic, working under apprenticeship in tailoring, or desiring to become a nurse, actress, or professional soccer player (IDP Child 1, 2026). One government official noted that there were a significantly greater number of girls in the settlement who had completed school compared to boys. Many boys dropped out of formal education early enough to work in either commercial motorcycling or manual trade jobs providing immediate income (NCFRMI Official 2, 2026).

Governance Exclusion and the Limits of Rights Awareness

The Adolescents at New Kuchingoro had an obvious and developed sense of their entitlements; specifically listing their entitlements as the right to be educated, to speak, to live and to give assent to decisions made on their behalf (IDP Child 1, 2026). In fact, one child noted that she regularly exercised her rights during NGO visits; she would express herself freely when queried about the adequacy of the conditions in which she lived (IDP Child 1, 2026). She directly stated that although she advocated on her own behalf when contacted by NGOs, her advocacy did not reach those in charge of making decisions with regard to the settlement (IDP Child 1, 2026).

The gap between understanding her rights and having a way to address issues through administration was made clearer by the children's accounts of security problems in the settlement. They mentioned random searches of their homes by military personnel looking for a vehicle thief, which led to the detention of about 200 residents, all of whom were later released. Additionally, they reported soldiers in uniforms extorting money, detaining young people until a family member paid up (IDP Child 1, 2026). As mentioned earlier, the destruction of their homes, recounted by both the adolescents and their parents, illustrates the same lack of access to decision-making: families received no warning before their homes were demolished; children learned about the demolitions while at school when a teacher interrupted the class to inform them (Parent 2, 2026; IDP Child 1, 2026).

When viewed collectively, these accounts demonstrate how the mechanism referenced in this research operates independently of whether individuals know or claim their rights. Children at New Kuchingoro are aware of their rights; they also understand how to assert themselves in terms of exercising their rights; however, they do not have an avenue to communicate their assertions to administrators.

DISCUSSION

The long standing non-recognition of the settlement despite NEMA's failed 2015 Resettlement Promise has exemplified the dynamic described by Scott (1998) on State Visibility: Populations that cannot be categorised using a State's methods for tracking, allocating funds, or observing become effectively invisible to government functions, even if they are legally entitled. Path dependency theory helps explain why this invisibility has persisted rather than being temporary. The withdrawal of international donors in 2016–2017 acted as a second critical moment that reinforced the first, aligning with Pierson's (2000) idea of increasing returns, where maintaining an existing situation becomes less costly than changing it. This finding expands upon Schimmel's (2022) description of the "Sovereignty Trap" that Internally Displaced Persons experience across the globe: They are not afforded the legal status of Refugees; the sovereignty trap is illustrated within a Country; because FEMA's complete rejection of establishing a camp in the FCT and NCFRMI's very minimal acknowledgment of the existence of the new Kuchingoro settlement demonstrates that the population has legal entitlement to protection but is neither officially acknowledged nor protected by any single governing entity.

This fragmentation is not merely a result of inadequate information-sharing, as suggested by Adio-Moses, Abiodun, and Fasaanu (2020) and Likeing and Aleh (2024) regarding Nigerian IDP coordination. Instead, it highlights the structural weaknesses identified by Ruesch, Tarakci, Besiou, and Van Quaquebeke (2022) in the humanitarian coordination framework, where no single entity is truly accountable as a coordinator. Since no agency takes ownership of the classification decision, the resulting budget cuts and bureaucratic delays stem from this lack of clear authority, rather than just capacity issues, making it increasingly difficult to resolve as the classification remains disputed.

Protracted displacement makes this situation even more complex. The education deficit in the settlement highlights the funding and access problems previously noted by Ezera and Oghenede (2021), as well as by Elegbede, Adedotun, Lapite, Idhalama, and Aluede (2024) nationally. Additionally, DiPrete and Eirich (2006) discuss cumulative advantage, which has been overlooked by both sets of researchers: unmet needs build up over time; this means that the longer these children go without receiving a secondary education, the harder it will be to rectify their deficits. When viewed through the lens of path dependency theory, the increasing burden of unresolved damage is another "generative" form of lock-in - similar but distinct from administrative inertia.

Ultimately, adolescents' strong perception of their rights, without a formal means for them to articulate these rights, challenges a fundamental assumption within the literature on norm diffusion: that when those intended to benefit from a norm adopt it, it indicates successful localisation (Acharya, 2004). Consistent with Lansdown's (2005) distinction between an individual's ability to claim a right and the formally established mechanism by which that claim can reach a duty-bearing party, the findings of this study show that societal awareness of rights and institutional acknowledgement are distinct and separate conditions.

The final result of this study leads to the main conclusion: International Child Protection Standards do not work effectively in New Kuchingoro. Not for the reason of a lack of laws in Nigeria or an absence of needed resources, but because the method of Administrative Classification used determines if ratified obligations will be budgeted for, have coordination mechanisms and monitoring mechanisms applied. This provides additional complexity to the existing literature regarding implementation of international standards in Nigeria, which identifies implementation as weak due to a general lack of capability (Ndana & Abdulrahman, 2020; Ihekerenma, Solomon, &

Samson, 2023; Akuchie & Akuchie, 2023); the findings suggest implementation is not weak everywhere, but specifically and predictably absent wherever classification denies a population administrative recognition.

CONCLUSION

New Kuchingoro exemplifies a type of process that is likely to occur repeatedly as long as long-term displacement is combined with administratively bounded governance. To understand why internationally accepted child welfare frameworks have failed to operate effectively in a settlement that is governed under the most highly ratified treaties on child rights, this study conclusion is not that Nigeria does not have a legal obligation to protect children, nor that it has insufficient resources to do so (in principle), nor that it does not recognize the issue; rather, the reason lies in how an established administrative designation ("informal settlement") influences which obligations are ever fulfilled, what resources are deployed toward fulfilling those obligations, and whether the knowledge about the needs of those children is ever utilised. Using path dependence, this paper demonstrated how three major juncture events (the Abuja 1979 Master Plan, the broken 2014-15 promise to resettle and the 2016-17 directive from the federal government) created an administrative designation for New Kuchingoro that was maintained.

The theoretical implications go beyond this case study as well. In any place where states create administrative classifications that determine who will receive assistance and support with respect to displacement, it can be anticipated that an individual/group's placement inside (or outside) of the officially recognised classification will have more predictive power on whether they realise their rights than the formal legal content of those rights, and legal reform alone should not be assumed to dislodge administrative arrangements locked in by earlier critical junctures.

This study has limitations due to its single-site focus. Future studies could investigate if the same causal mechanism described in this study is also present in different Nigerian States and in other protracted displacement contexts. Additionally, future studies could explore if simply changing an individual's classification status would be enough to address the "implementation gap" or if there would continue to be some degree of fragmentation despite having received official recognition.

National Level: The FCT Administration should consider revisiting its decision not to allow formal IDP camps for the people who live in New Kuchingoro. The FCT Administration could assist New Kuchingoro's residents in establishing a long-term, durable resettlement that provides them with officially recognised housing, educational facilities, and access to health care. Alternatively, the FCT Administration can officially integrate the community into neighbouring host communities and offer sufficient assistance from the Federal Government. In addition, the FCT Administration needs to develop an integrated system among FEMA, NCFRMI, and NEMA as well as establish a special, secured child welfare budget line to address the financing barrier Ezera and Oghenede (2021) identified as a major limitation in implementing Nigeria's national IDP child welfare policies. Additionally, the FCT Administration needs to fully implement the Child Rights Act, specifically providing all children with free compulsory education up until secondary school age, which will be a key factor in addressing some of the barriers identified by Elegbede et al. (2024).

Regional Level: The African Union ought to continue its oversight of how member states apply the Kampala Convention, particularly regarding local administrative practices. A case in point is Nigeria's continued designation of long-standing settlements as informal, which weakens the Convention's protective purpose, no matter how formally it has been integrated.

International Level: Humanitarian organisations and donors should expand their displacement-focused programs from northeastern Nigeria to other displacement sites, including FCT settlements such as New Kuchingoro. They should also focus on enhancing the technical and financial abilities of local agencies in charge of implementation, rather than viewing ratification or domestication as a final goal. Collectively, These recommendations together support an overall argument for research on displacement governance: The protection of internally displaced

children throughout Africa cannot rely solely on internationally established protections; it requires the development of the institutional capacity, coordination and political will necessary to transform protections into actualised protection.

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