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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-56518

Title: HE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE AMBAZONIAN CONFLICT ON HOST COMMUNITIES IN IKOM AND ITS ENVIRONS, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA, 2016-2024

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Dr Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The article titled "The Socio-Economic Impact of the Ambazonian Conflict on Host Communities in Ikom and its Environs, Cross River State, Nigeria, 2016-2024" offers a rigorous and necessary examination of the localized consequences of regional instability. By focusing on the Ikom Local Government Area, the author provides a granular analysis of how the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has transcended national borders to reshape the demographic and economic landscape of southeastern Nigeria. The paper effectively utilizes Conflict Theory and the Human Security Framework to move beyond a simple tally of refugee numbers, instead exploring the profound "strain" placed on shared resources, social infrastructure, and communal harmony. This interdisciplinary approach is a significant strength, as it captures the multidimensionality of forced migration within an African context.

The methodology is well-suited for a contemporary historical and sociological study, blending secondary sources with what appears to be a solid understanding of the regional socio-political climate. The author's choice of the 2016-2024 timeframe is particularly relevant, as it encompasses the entire trajectory of the conflict from its initial escalation to its current protracted state. The research accurately identifies the "dual-edged" nature of the refugee influx. On one hand, the author details the negative externalities, such as increased competition for arable land, environmental degradation due to over-farming, and the inflation of food prices. On the other hand, the study provides a nuanced view of the positive contributions made by the displaced population, including the injection of new labor into the agricultural

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sector and the expansion of cross-border trade networks. This balanced perspective prevents the paper from falling into a one-sided "burden" narrative.

A particularly compelling section of the article is the discussion of "shared cultural and ethnic ties" between the host communities in Ikom and the Ambazonian refugees. The author correctly identifies that these ties—often predating colonial borders—served as an initial cushion that facilitated the integration of thousands of people. However, the study also highlights the breaking point of this solidarity as resources become increasingly scarce. This transition from "ethnic hospitality" to "resource competition" is a vital contribution to the study of borderland dynamics. The analysis of the strain on healthcare and educational facilities in Ikom is equally poignant, demonstrating how a humanitarian crisis in one nation can effectively "de-develop" the border regions of its neighbor by overwhelming existing public services. However, the manuscript would benefit from a few minor revisions to strengthen its academic impact. While the theoretical framework is sound, the application of Conflict Theory could be more explicitly linked to the specific "tensions" mentioned in the empirical findings. For instance, the author could further elaborate on whether the competition for land has led to actual instances of communal violence or if it remains at the level of administrative dispute. Furthermore, the paper would be enhanced by the inclusion of a map or a more detailed demographic table illustrating the concentration of refugees across the various wards of Ikom. This spatial data would help the reader visualize the "pressure points" identified in the text.

Additionally, the section on the environmental impact of the influx—specifically deforestation and soil depletion—merits a slightly deeper exploration. The author mentions these issues, but a brief discussion of how local land-use policies have or have not adapted to this increased pressure would provide a more complete picture of the "Human Security" dimension. The concluding section is strong, correctly emphasizing that the management of this crisis requires a coordinated effort between the Nigerian state, the Cross River government, and international humanitarian agencies. However, the author could offer more specific policy recommendations regarding the "regularization" of refugee labor to better protect both the displaced persons and the host laborers from exploitation.

The structure of the article is logical, and the narrative flow is consistent. The language is academic yet accessible, making the research valuable for both scholars of African studies and practitioners in the field of international development. The bibliography is current and reflects a good grasp of both the specific conflict and the broader theories of migration. By documenting the resilience and the vulnerabilities of

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the Ikom host communities, the author has produced a significant piece of scholarship that underscores the interdependence of border communities in West Africa.

I recommend this article for publication with minor revisions.