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NIGERIA

Fragmented response to internal displacement amid Boko Haram attacks and flood season

Brutal attacks by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram, including this month's pre-dawn raid on a boarding school in which members of the group doused a student dormitory in fuel and set it ablaze as children slept, have focused attention on Nigeria's embattled north-eastern region. Boko Haram's violence and the heavy-handed counter-insurgency operations against it have triggered significant displacement in recent years, but they constitute only one of many crises that force people to flee their homes. Other causes include recurrent inter-communal conflicts, widespread and serious flooding, and forced evictions.

Most internally displaced people (IDPs) live with host families, and their needs are neither assessed nor addressed by government or international actors. Those who live in camps receive relief, but they still often lack access to sufficient food, essential

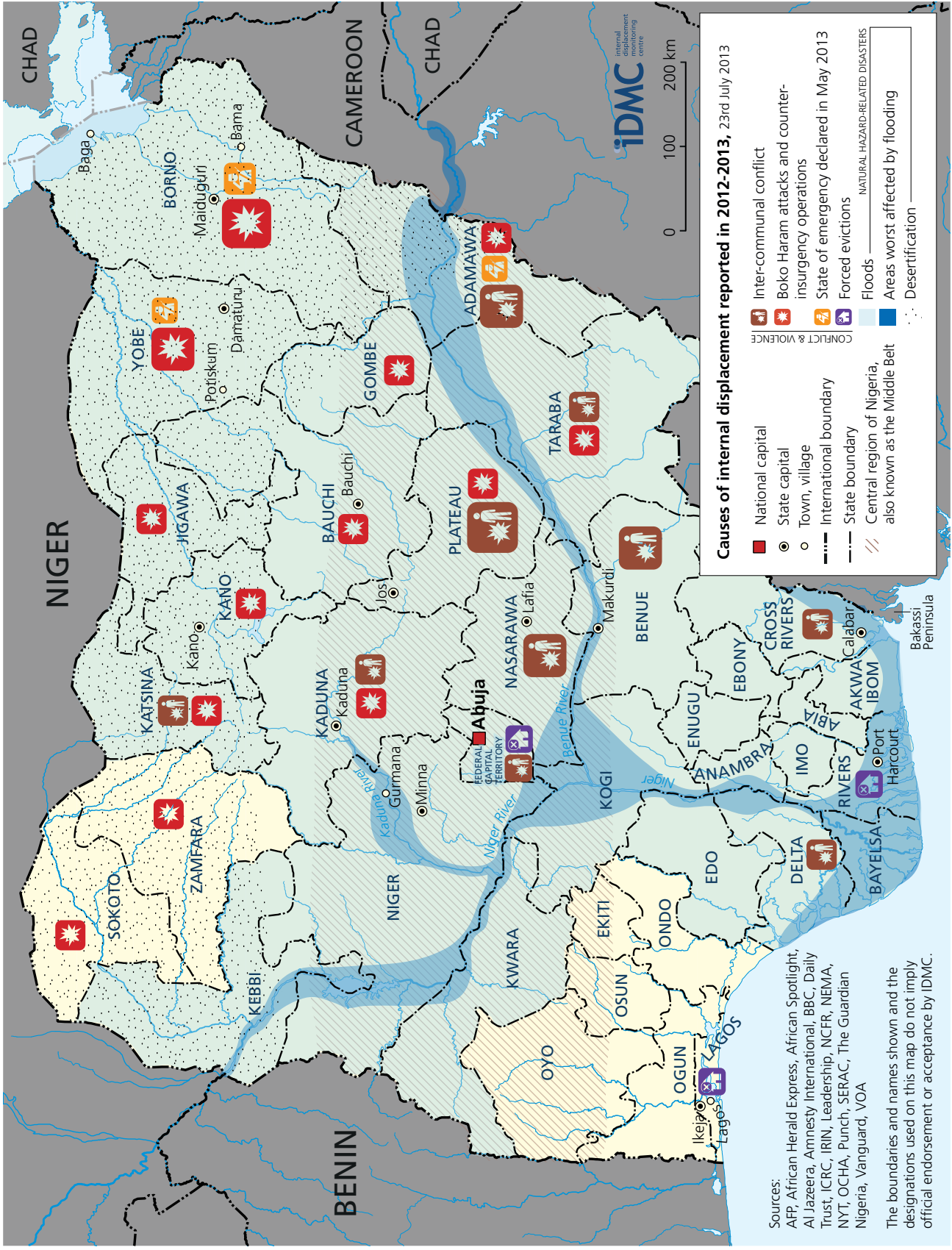
household items and health facilities. Most camps and camp-like settings close after a few weeks after displacement takes place, and little is done to help IDPs find durable solutions to their displacement. Protection risks are widespread in areas that suffer conflict and violence, and many people are afraid to return home. Whether their property has been damaged or destroyed by conflict or flooding, many IDPs do not have a home to go back to.

Figures on displacement are often only available after larger scale crises, but they suggest that violence and disasters caused by natural hazards have forced a staggering number of people to flee their homes. Millions were displaced by flooding in 2012 alone. The full scale and impact of internal displacement in Nigeria are unclear, in part because data collection is poor and inconsistent. These gaps result in an alarming lack of understanding of the country's displacement dynamics, most notably how people's vulnerabilities are complicated by multiple cycles of displacement, and lead to response efforts that are fragmented and generally inadequate.

Progress made in recent years to protect and assist IDPs in Nigeria is encouraging. The country ratified the African Union "Kampala Convention" on internal displacement in May 2012 and rewrote a draft policy on IDPs to incorporate its provisions. One year on, however, the country's cabinet, the Federal Executive Council, and the National Assembly are still to adopt the policy, or a domestic law to implement the Convention. The absence of such frameworks as a means of clearly defining roles and responsibilities has, and will continue to, hamper humanitarian and development efforts to mitigate the effects of internal displacement. They are also essential to a holistic approach in supporting IDPs' search for durable solutions, and in preparing for and preventing future displacement.



Girls standing in front of a water-damaged house in Gurmana, Niger state, which has flooded every year for decades. During the 2012 floods, the whole village had to temporarily relocate to the primary school. Photo: IDMC/Noémie Pierre, May 2013



Background

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. It has a rapidly growing population of at least 160 million, of whom more than half are from three main ethnic groups – the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. The remainder are divided into nearly 400 other groups ([UNISDR](#), A.R. Mustapha, 2006). Despite Nigeria's vast oil and mineral resources, nearly 65% of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day. An alarming and widening income gap is indicative of years of mismanagement and corruption ([IDMC](#), June 2012 profile).

Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, thousands of people have been killed in recurring inter-communal conflicts and politically motivated violence that have also caused consistently large waves of internal displacement. In April 2013, Nigeria was ranked the world's fourth most violent country, with a security situation that has deteriorated sharply since 2010 ([ACLED](#), April 2013).

Clashes over natural resources in the country's oil-rich Niger Delta and the displacement they caused have declined significantly since the government granted an amnesty to militant groups there in 2009. The causes of the conflict, however, are still to be properly addressed and could flare up again ([IDMC](#), June 2012 profile).

Causes of displacement¹

Inter-communal conflict and the Middle Belt

Protracted inter-communal conflicts regularly lead to death and displacement throughout Nigeria. They are fuelled by disputes over land and broadly overlapping ethnic, religious, political and regional divisions, but much focus is placed on the religious element. This was evident dur-

ing the conflict over sharia law in Kaduna in 2000, and the 2001 clashes in Jos, the capital of Plateau state, which led to the displacement of thousands of people. Violence following the April 2011 election of President Goodluck Jonathan also took on religious and ethnic overtones and led to the displacement of around 65,000 people ([HRW](#), 16 May 2011; [ICG](#), 2011).

Many of these clashes take place in Nigeria's Middle Belt, which is made up of the country's central states and forms the crossroads between the mainly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south. Violence between nomadic Muslim herders, who are seen as "settlers", and Christian farmers, who are seen as "indigenous", flare up regularly ([IDMC](#), June 2012 profile). The conflict, essentially over rival claims on land and economic resources, has caused widespread loss of life, destruction of property and internal displacement. At least 40,000 people in this region fled their homes in 2012, and Nigeria was ranked among ten countries whose civilians were most at risk, the result in large part of violence in the Middle Belt ([Minority Rights Group](#), July 2013).

Data is limited, but hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to have been displaced as the violence has increased over the past 15 years ([International Crisis Group](#), 17 December 2012). Tensions between communities have been aggravated by prejudicial government policies that relegate millions of Nigerians to second-class citizens by discriminating against "non-indigenes" or "settlers" who are unable to prove roots linking them to the original inhabitants of an area ([HRW](#), 2006 and 2009). The principle behind the concept of "indigenisation" was to protect the identity, rights and interests of the country's numerous minority groups. It has turned, however, into a powerful means of exclusion under which non-indigenes are denied access to already limited resources and opportunities in terms of education, land ownership, participation in political affairs and public sector jobs ([HRW](#) 2006 and 2009).

¹ For a more in-depth background of the causes of internal displacement, see IDMC's [June 2012 overview](#), the [June 2012 profile](#) and visit IDMC's [Nigeria country page](#).

Boko Haram attacks and counterinsurgency operations

Since 2009, the Islamist militant group Boko Haram has carried out increasingly frequent and sophisticated attacks and bombings. These and the heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations against the group have caused an estimated 3,000 deaths, the destruction of property and significant displacement ([HRW](#), 2013; [AI](#), 24 January 2012; [IRIN](#), 18 July 2011). Boko Haram, which in Hausa means “western education is forbidden”, was founded a decade ago in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri. It rose to prominence in 2009 after launching an insurgency against the government in several northern states in which more than 800 people were killed ([Danjibo](#), 2009: 10; [HRW](#), March 2012; [Je’adayibe](#), 2010; [Reuters](#), 9 April 2012).

The group has been growing in ambition and capability. It initially targeted the northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe, but began to operate further afield in late 2010, when it bombed buildings in Jos. It has since pushed further south, bombing the police and UN office in Abuja in June and August 2011 respectively ([Shaka](#), 2011, p.3; *The Economist*, [27 August](#) and [8 November 2011](#), [23](#) and [28](#) January 2012). It initially targeted police and government facilities, mosques and churches, but began attacking bars and beer gardens in June 2011 and schools in February 2012 ([AI](#), 24 January 2012; [HRW](#), 7 March 2012). Attacks on schools became more frequent in 2013 ([Washington Post](#), 10 July 2013). In one of the most recent, the militants launched a raid on a student dormitory near Potiskum in Yobe state, dousing the building in fuel and setting it ablaze, burning some school children alive and shooting others as they tried to flee. The attack prompted the closure of schools throughout the state ([IRIN](#), 8 July 2013).

On 16 and 17 April 2013, Nigerian forces launched a counterinsurgency operation against Boko Haram in the town of Baga in Borno state. This led to the destruction of more than 2,200 buildings,

mainly homes, and caused many people to flee ([HRW](#), 1 May 2013), but humanitarian access has been limited since. The following month, Boko Haram launched a large-scale attack on the town of Bama, also in Borno state, in which 55 people were killed ([AFP](#), 7 May 2013).

In May 2013, President Jonathan declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states after acknowledging that Boko Haram had taken control of parts of Borno ([AFP](#), 15 May 2013). Information on the military and humanitarian situation in all three states is scarce, as the Nigerian authorities suspended mobile phone networks in an attempt to disrupt communication between the militants ([BBC](#), 27 May 2013). A lack of access and monitoring means there is little information available on people displaced internally, but as of 18 June more than 9,000 people had fled the north-east to country to Niger, Cameroon and Chad ([UNHCR](#), 18 June 2013). Some IDPs in the northern state of Gombe have received assistance, but the exact number and location of those in need is unknown ([This Day](#), 5 July 2013).

In the context of mass poverty, unemployment and inadequate law enforcement, Boko Haram has gained support by playing on people’s frustrations and using religion to further its ends. Northern Nigeria is generally poorer than the rest of the country and residents complain of corruption, inequality and the government’s failure to address their problems. Muslims have also accused the predominantly Christian southerners of monopolising oil revenues and government posts ([IDMC](#), June 2012 profile). Some young men in north-eastern states have formed vigilante groups to hunt down Boko Haram members ([This Day](#), 12 June 2013), prompting the group to add youths to their list of assassination targets ([Daily Trust](#), 19 June 2013). Preliminary investigations by the International Criminal Court show there is reason to believe that Boko Haram has committed crimes against humanity since 2009 ([ICC](#), November 2012), and there are fears that the May 2013 mili-

tary crackdown will drive more angry young men and boys into its ranks ([IRIN](#), 22 May 2013).

Forced evictions

More than two million urban Nigerians, mainly slum-dwellers and other marginalised people, have been forcibly evicted from their homes since 2000, most notably in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt. Evictions are sanctioned by state governments and carried out in the name of security and urban renewal, but they have taken place without adequate consultation, notice, compensation or offers of alternative accommodation. In addition to breaching victims' right to adequate housing, forced evictions amount to arbitrary displacement and often lead to violations of other human rights, such as health care, education and livelihood opportunities ([AI](#), 2011, Agenda: 39). They have led to intra-urban displacement and left thousands of people homeless ([IDMC](#), June 2012 profile).

In June 2012, it was reported that as many as 20,000 people had been left homeless by the clearance of Abonnema waterfront in Port Harcourt. The demolitions took place despite an interim High Court order preventing the government of Rivers state from carrying out its plan, which violated international standards and the state's own laws ([AI](#), July 2012). Demolitions in the Makoko neighbourhood of Lagos resumed in July 2012 and another of the city's slums, Badia East, was partly demolished in February 2013 ([The New York Times](#), 1 March 2013). A human rights group reported that demolitions in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) around Abuja had left more than 800,000 people homeless between 2003 and 2007 ([COHRE](#), accessed 11 July 2013).

Recurrent floods

Floods are a regular occurrence in Nigeria, particularly in lowlands and river basins, where the most vulnerable communities live and work. Mud bricks used for construction in many rural areas offer little or no resistance to the flood-

waters, leading to the loss of homes and food stocks. Farmland is also inundated and cattle are drowned. Flooding in urban areas is made worse by poor or non-existent drainage and a lack of adequate town planning ([Think Africa Press](#), 18 October 2012).

Displacement is caused not only by heavy rains and overflowing water courses but also by the mismanaged release of water from dam reservoirs, both in Nigeria and in upstream locations in neighbouring countries. As a result of the neglect of dam structures and blockage of natural water drainages, excess water cannot be discharged in time and accumulates, prompting dam authorities to open waterways when the dam reaches maximum capacity ([Daily Trust](#), 7 October 2012).

The most devastating floods in the last 40 years hit the country between July and October 2012, causing the world's second largest disaster-induced displacement event of the year. The floods affecting populated areas of the vast river plains of the Benue and Niger rivers and their tributaries across 33 of the country's 36 states. An inter-agency assessment carried out in 14 of the affected states estimated that around 5.7 million animals had been killed and two million hectares of farmland lost ([GIEWS](#), 15 January 2013).

Desertification

Desertification caused by climate change as well as human activities, including deforestation, is a cause of internal displacement in at least 11 northern states ([Leadership](#), July 2013). Many of these areas have a land-based economy and are also affected by worsening violence. It has been estimated that 350,000 hectares of land are lost to the desert each year, forcing people to migrate south towards the volatile Middle Belt region ([Vanguard](#), 3 May 2010). Their search for fertile land and a place to settle puts them in direct competition with "indigene" communities over scarce resources. During Nigeria's first summit on desertification in the north, Zamfara state authori-

ties acknowledged that thousands of people had already been displaced and that the phenomenon was likely to worsen and increase poverty and hunger ([Sunday Trust](#), 20 November 2011).

Displacement figures and patterns

Sporadic assessments following crises suggest that Nigeria hosts a high number of IDPs at any given time, but the true scale of the phenomenon is unknown. There is no trustworthy cumulative figure and a lack of comprehensive information on the situation of those displaced. This is in part due to complex displacement patterns, but also because government agencies have limited capacity and poor methodologies when it comes to collecting and collating reliable data. These gaps result in an alarming lack of understanding of the country's displacement dynamics in Nigeria, and lead to response efforts that are fragmented and generally inadequate.

Figures that are available vary significantly and are widely considered to be underestimates, with data usually collected on an ad hoc basis when large-scale or serious crises occur. At the height of the 2012 floods, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) estimated that 7.7 million people had been affected across the country, of whom 2.1 million had registered as IDPs in order to receive assistance. The National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), meanwhile, put the number of displaced at 6.1 million (IDMC, [Global Estimates 2012](#), May 2013). At least 63,000 people were newly displaced by conflict and violence across the country in 2012 (IDMC, [Global Overview](#), 29 April 2013), and another 55,000 are thought to have been evicted, 25,000 from Abonnema waterfront in Port Harcourt and 30,000 from the Makoko slum in Lagos (SERAC, 2012, on file with IDMC). NEMA estimates put the number of people displaced by inter-communal clashes between January and April 2013 at nearly 50,000 (OCHA, [1 March 2013](#), [1 April 2013](#), [1 May 2013](#)).

Challenges in data collection

Collecting data on IDPs is complex and challenging throughout Nigeria, and both state and local government capacities vary widely. Data is only occasionally disaggregated by age, sex and location. Three main organisations collect data on IDPs, but there is currently no official mechanism to standardise their methods or harmonise their findings.

- NEMA collects information via State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) on IDPs who seek refuge in camps or camp-like settings and who receive assistance. Staff are sent to displacement-affected areas to collect information on IDPs' age, places of origin and, in some cases, vulnerabilities. NEMA does not have a standardised form for such assessments, so comparisons and trends are difficult to establish (IDMC interview with NEMA, May 2013).
- NCFR uses a standardised form to collect data in camps, but it relies heavily on information provided by other organisations, as its own presence and resources are limited (IDMC interview with NCFR, May 2013).
- The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) collects data through its local branches and volunteers across the country. It registers IDPs when it provides relief, but maintains no centralised database (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013).

While data collection efforts focus on camps and camp-like settings, most IDPs find refuge with host families and communities. Providing shelter for people in need is part of Nigerian culture, and many people would not let their relatives stay in camps, where large households also lack space and privacy (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013). There is almost no data or information on these IDPs or their hosts, and estimates of the number of people displaced during crises are sometimes produced by simply counting destroyed and damaged homes in the towns and villages people have fled.

Estimates rarely capture return movements, or secondary or protracted displacement. Of the millions of people forced to flee their homes during the 2012 floods, for example, it is unknown how many had previously been displaced or were still living in displacement as a result of flooding or violence in preceding years.

Fluid displacement patterns

Internal displacement patterns in Nigeria are complex and fluid. In the absence of a functioning monitoring mechanism, there is no holistic understanding, but it is generally acknowledged that people who flee conflict and violence remain displaced for longer than those who flee other natural hazards-related disasters.

Conflict and violence often result in the destruction of homes and other infrastructure such as schools and clinics, and many of those who flee are left with psychological scars and a fear of returning home. These factors combine to cause displacement that can last for months or even years, and many IDPs ultimately choose to integrate locally. They reportedly prefer to seek refuge in communities with similar ethnic and language backgrounds (IDMC interview with FCT officials, May 2013).

In contrast, many IDPs displaced by floods return in a matter of days or weeks when the waters recede. Those without the means to repair or rebuild their property quickly squat nearby or stay with host families until they are able to go back to their homes and land ([The Guardian Nigeria](#), 3 March 2013). Occasionally, however, displacement caused by natural hazards can last much longer. As of May 2013, seven months after the peak of the 2012 floods, some IDPs in Borno state were still living in camps (IDMC interview with OCHA, May 2013).

Multiple displacement and compounded vulnerabilities

Information on people displaced multiple times and their coping strategies is scarce. It is known,

however, that many states in the north and the Middle Belt region experience recurrent conflict and violence, which causes displacement each time tensions flare. In Plateau, Yobe, Borno and Nasarawa, some families have been displaced many times, but are treated each time as if it were their first (IDMC interview with NCFR, May 2013).

Many residents of areas prone to flooding face the prospect of annual displacement, forced to flee their damaged homes and farmland every year and start from scratch upon their return, their vulnerabilities and poverty increased with each cycle of displacement. The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET) has forecast that rainfall patterns in 2013 will be similar to those of 2012, but with some states in the west and north-east of the country likely to be harder hit than last year ([This Day](#), 17 February 2013). Many of those likely to be affected in the coming months have still not fully recovered from the 2012 floods ([VOA](#), 16 June 2013).

The current focus on short-term, emergency response on an ad hoc basis creates a near blind spot in terms of understanding how IDPs' vulnerabilities increase with each cycle of displacement. It also hampers any genuine effort to address the causes of displacement, or to help people at risk prepare for or prevent it.

Protection concerns

In the absence of an effective monitoring mechanism, there is little information on the protection risks affecting IDPs. Information is anecdotal and collected only from IDPs who live in camps.

Threats to life and freedom of movement

IDPs face a range of threats to their physical safety and restrictions to their freedom of movement, as shown by the May 2013 military crackdown in three north-eastern states. A preliminary UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessment mission to

Gombe state found that IDPs were forced to pay fees to pass through checkpoints. This led an unknown number of people to flee instead through heavily forested areas, raising the fear that they could be mistakenly associated with Boko Haram militants on the move ([BBC](#), 20 May 2013, IDMC interview with OCHA, May 2013). The fact that IDPs do not carry ID cards when on the move can complicate their flight further, even though most Nigerians do not have such documents (IDMC interview with OCHA, May 2013).

Nigerian refugees in Niger and Cameroon recently reported that the army had executed men wearing traditional robes and generally used excessive force during the crackdown ([AFP](#), 26 May 2012, [The New York Times](#), 5 June 2012). Their testimony echoed reports of the extra-judicial killing of people trying to flee the military in Maiduguri in 2012 ([Amnesty International](#), November 2012).

Forced evictions

Forced evictions are usually carried out in the name of security, development or “beautification” projects ([IRIN](#), 23 November 2011). They are often brutal affairs, undertaken by demolition squads with bulldozers escorted by armed police and security forces (SERAC, June 2012, on file with IDMC). During the demolition of the East Badia slum in Lagos, people were given 20 minutes to pack and leave. Those who went back to grab possessions were beaten with rifle butts and batons ([The New York Times](#), 1 March 2013). A community leader died in 2012 after being shot by police officers during the demolition of settlements in the city’s Makoko slum ([Premium Times](#), 12 November 2012). Evictions place women at higher risk of sexual abuse and arbitrary arrest. Many women evicted from Abonnema waterfront said they had been left with no option but to turn to prostitution as they were unable to find alternative income ([AI](#), July 2012).

Since Nigeria ceded the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon in 2002, the Cameroonian authori-

ties have reportedly targeted IDPs with violence, arrests, harassment and forced evictions ([Rhema Care](#), April 2013). In March 2013, five IDPs living in Efut Obot Ikot settlement were killed while trying to resist eviction ([Punch](#), 3 April 2013). As many as 60 people were allegedly arrested during the raid, but there was no further information on their situation (Caritas Nigeria, 2013, on file with IDMC).

Violence against women and children

Sexual violence is believed to be widespread in Nigeria, with two million women and girls estimated to suffer such abuses each year ([Africa Renewal](#), 16 January 2012). Internally displaced women express safety concerns both in host communities and in camps, and especially at night (Caritas Nigeria, November 2012, on file with IDMC). Victims, however, rarely report cases of sexual violence for fear of their families’ or communities’ rejection. Some only report their experiences to humanitarian workers after their second or third visit (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013). In October 2012, 19 rapes were reported in camps hosting flood victims in Makurdi, Benue state, but none of the cases were referred to the police because the victims felt ashamed. The same source reported rapes as a daily occurrence in the Makurdi camps, committed both by other camp members and men from nearby communities ([Vanguard](#), 16 October 2012).

A rapid child protection assessment carried out in November 2012 found that sexual violence against children was on the rise, with cases of their being offered as prostitutes in exchange for food. Boys were also at risk of being forcibly recruited by armed groups. A lack of organised camp management makes abuses easier to perpetrate ([UNICEF](#), November 2012).

Assistance needs

As most IDPs living outside camps are not included in assessments, their specific needs are neither

well known nor addressed. Those in camps have more clearly defined needs, but these are not fully addressed.

Lack of adequate and safe shelter

Access to adequate shelter is the most pressing need IDPs face. Rather than flee to official camps, those who do not stay with friends or family usually seek refuge in camp-like settings such as schools, sports centres, churches, mosques and university campuses, where aid is delivered. These facilities often become overcrowded ([OCHA](#), 6 November 2012), and some are outdoors, forcing IDPs to sleep exposed to the elements and with no protection from mosquitoes ([IRIN](#), 12 February 2010). When tents are provided, some still prefer to sleep in public buildings and use their tents to store their belongings (IDMC email exchange with OCHA, March 2013). Some IDPs have no access to safe shelter at all and take refuge in the bush ([IRIN](#), 7 May 2013).

Both official and informal camps tend to remain open for only a short period of time, typically several weeks to a month, after which the authorities shut them down and stop delivering aid. In February 2013, for example, the Nasarawa state government ordered 12,500 IDPs to go back home a week after they had been displaced by communal violence, assuring the distraught families that the return areas were safe ([Vanguard](#), 2 February 2013). Towards the end of the 2012 floods, several states ordered camps to be closed in order to allow public facilities to resume their regular activities ([OCHA](#), 21 November 2012). Some of the IDPs affected reported that they had nowhere else to go and that the government had not provided them with any food or money to pay for transport home ([Punch](#), 17 November 2012).

In the case of floods, many vulnerable communities across Nigeria see their homes damaged or destroyed on an almost annual basis, and in the absence of other options simply wait for their inevitable displacement when the rainy season ar-

rives. Some, however, have sought to take preventive measures. The population of Gurmana, a village in Niger state where inhabitants have fished the lowland rivers for hundreds of years, asked the authorities to provide them with tents so they could relocate their families and belongings before the floods. This would have helped them avoid disrupting their children's education by occupying the primary school, as they had been forced to do in the past. Months after making the request, however, they had received no reply. Despite having previously agreed to permanently relocate their village to higher ground the authorities had identified, they had received no support to do so (IDMC visit to Gurmana, May 2013).

People forcefully evicted are often left homeless ([AI](#), Agenda 2011 - 2015). Many take refuge under bridges ([Punch](#), 28 July 2012) or simply live on the street ([Punch](#), 19 November 2012). After the recent demolition of parts of Abonnema waterfront in Port Harcourt, some people found shelter in a church, but many were forced onto the street during the rainy season, which further limited their chances of finding adequate shelter ([AI](#), 9 July 2012).

Basic needs unmet

IDPs are often unable to fulfil their basic rights to food or essential household items such as sleeping mats, mosquito nets, jerry cans, soap and cooking utensils. They usually lose access to their sources of revenue when they flee, and assistance to those living in camps, when provided, is inadequate. An inter-agency mission to assess the impact of the 2012 floods found that food deliveries were meagre and irregular. Food insecurity was estimated to be severe or very severe in 82 per cent of the communities visited ([IRIN](#), 9 November 2012). Reports also indicated that food prices had risen between 30 and 70 per cent in areas affected by the flooding ([IFRC](#), 27 December 2012).

IDPs displaced by violence also face substantial needs, and their ability to acquire food for them-

selves can be restricted by the imposition of curfews ([ICRC](#), 17 July 2012). During a July 2012 counter-terrorism operation in Plateau state, the military evacuated thousands of people from their villages and relocated them to makeshift camps without adequate shelter or food ([VOA](#), 18 July 2012). Some IDPs tried to leave the camp a few days later and return to their villages as they did not have enough to eat and Ramadan was approaching ([Daily Trust](#), 20 July 2012).

The current food crisis in the Sahel region has affected north-eastern Nigeria, which is becoming increasingly vulnerable as the ongoing violence has also disrupted trade and agriculture ([IRIN](#), 27 May 2013). Some reports suggest that 19,000 farmers have abandoned their farms in the north-east because of Boko Haram violence, and that the May 2013 military crackdown has prevented thousands more from working their fields ([AP](#), 18 June 2013).

Poor health and hygiene conditions

The situation varies between states but overall, hygiene and sanitation in camps and camp-like settings is poor and clean water is not always available. This contributes to the spread of disease among IDPs. Common health problems identified during the 2012 floods included malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, skin infections, measles and chicken pox ([IFRC](#), 22 November 2012).

In a camp in Daudu district, near Makurdi in Benue state, there are no latrines and the closest water source is a dammed river four kilometres away (NRCS, May 2013, on file with IDMC). Forty-five women and children are believed to have died as a result of poor sanitation and the absence of health care in the camp, where new IDPs continue to arrive ([Daily Trust](#), 8 June 2013). In a Cross River state camp hosting Bakassi IDPs, pregnant women gave birth to their children with the help of older displaced women, who also provide care and support. Local authorities had previously set up a medical facility with medicines and other

supplies but it was dismantled soon after a visit from the state governor ([Rhema Care](#), April 2012).

In most cases, IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings have no access to health care facilities nearby. This increases vulnerabilities, particularly among pregnant women and children (IDMC interview with NCFR, May 2013). Where there are health facilities close to the camps, services usually have to be paid for. Access is hampered further in some areas by the damage caused to facilities by conflict and flooding, and the displacement of staff. Psychosocial care is all but non-existent, despite the trauma experienced by many IDPs, particularly victims or witnesses of violence.

Blocked access to education

With many IDPs sheltering in schools, and humanitarian assistance often limited to life-saving interventions, internally displaced children are generally unable to pursue their education. Only rarely are schools set up in camps, for example in areas where UNICEF is present (IDMC interview with Caritas Nigeria, May 2013). An inter-agency assessment after the 2012 floods showed that in the communities visited, 77 per cent of schools had been destroyed and IDPs had occupied the remainder ([OCHA](#), 1 April 2013). It is not known whether displaced children living with host families have been able to enroll in schools.

Obstacles to durable solutions

Internal displacement in Nigeria is generally addressed as a short-term and humanitarian issue, with minimal resources dedicated to helping people return, integrate locally or settle elsewhere in the country. This lack of focus on durable solutions and the absence of countrywide monitoring mean that only limited information is available on IDPs' fate beyond the emergency response phase. The information that does exist suggests that they still have substantial needs, particularly in terms of shelter and livelihoods.

Damaged and destroyed property

Whether they are fleeing conflict and violence, natural hazards or forced evictions, IDPs very often leave behind property that has been damaged or destroyed. Satellite imagery obtained by Human Rights Watch after the April military offensive in Baga, Borno state, revealed that more than 2,200 homes had been destroyed, mainly by fire ([HRW](#), 1 May 2013). Violence in March between Muslim herders and Christian farmers in Plateau state resulted in dozens of houses being burned to the ground ([AFP](#), 30 March 2013). Similar violence flared up in Benue state in October 2012, causing the displacement of more than 5,000 people after homes were set alight ([Leadership](#), 17 October 2012).

Damaged or destroyed property is a significant obstacle for IDPs who wish to return, as they are unable to afford the cost of reconstruction. For those whose livelihoods are closely linked to their property – such as farmers in rural areas or people running small businesses from their homes in urban slums – the difficulty is compounded. Little is known about what happens to IDPs who have lost their homes or property, or are unable to return to them.

In some states, people affected by flooding and those at risk have been strongly advised to resettle on higher ground, on land identified by the authorities. Unless they receive financial or material support for transport and construction, however, most are not in a position to make the move (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013).

Victims of forced evictions are often left homeless. For some of those evicted from Abonnema waterfront in Port Harcourt, it was their second such experience, having been forcibly removed from Njemanze waterfront three years before ([AI](#), July 2012). Several years after their eviction, some IDPs in Abuja are still sleeping under bridges, or in shopping centres, stairwells, parks or abandoned cars. Others have made arrangements with shopkeepers to sleep inside their premises, either

on a regular basis or at least when it rains. IDPs who wish to use public conveniences usually have to pay, with one reporting a charge of ten naira (\$0.06) to take a shower ([Daily Trust](#), 20 April 2013).

Lack of livelihood opportunities

The loss of farmland, livestock and tools mean that many IDPs are unable to resume their livelihood activities after their displacement, and most receive no form of assistance to do so.

Farmers affected by the 2012 floods in Edo state said they had received no help from the local government and that they had to travel to another local government area to receive any ([Daily Trust](#), 18 February 2012). Where assistance is available, many IDPs remain dependent on it months after their displacement ([FEWS NET](#), March 2013).

Many conflicts between farmers and herders are fuelled in part by the lack of available land for cultivation and grazing, and several states in northern Nigeria are losing farmland because of desertification ([Vanguard](#), 3 May 2010). The division of communities into “indigenous” and “settler” groups also hampers IDPs’ access to land. A few have reportedly been given indigene status, affording them the same opportunities as the local population ([Ferris](#), May 2013), but the practice is not widespread. IDPs who flee from rural areas to towns and cities generally lack the skills to establish urban livelihoods.

Displaced widows are particularly vulnerable, given the prejudice that exists towards widowhood in some parts of Nigeria. In such communities, widows are obliged to surrender all land and property titles to their dead husband’s family, leaving them with no recourse to regain access and no means of establishing an alternative livelihood ([IDMC](#), May 2008). Their situation is complicated further by the fact that Nigerian women are generally less educated than men, earn lower incomes and have little decision-making power (Okekanmi, 2008, on file with IDMC).

National response

National efforts to prevent internal displacement and mitigate its effects are seen as fragmented, uncoordinated and generally inadequate. This is due in part to the absence of a law and policy framework that set out responsibilities in terms of providing IDPs with protection and assistance. In the absence of clear roles for the various ministries, departments and agencies involved, they often compete with each other for the limited funding available.

Nigeria ratified the Kampala Convention in May 2012 and rewrote a draft policy on IDPs to incorporate its provisions. One year on, however, the country's cabinet, the Federal Executive Council, and the National Assembly are still to adopt the draft policy or put in place a domestic law based on the convention. With national elections scheduled for 2015 and political parties already positioning themselves for their campaigns, there is a risk that the policy, which is crucial for the establishment of a coherent, coordinated and holistic response to internal displacement, will remain as a draft for the foreseeable future.

Assistance mechanisms

The response to IDPs' assistance and protection needs is generally addressed via disaster management mechanisms. Under the 1999 National Emergency Management Agency Act ([PLAC](#), accessed July 2013), NEMA is mandated to distribute emergency relief materials to victims of "natural or other disasters" and assist in the rehabilitation of victims. It provides short-term assistance, usually for the first two to four weeks of displacement (IDMC interview with NEMA, May 2013), but is also mandated to "assist in the rehabilitation of the victims [of disasters] where necessary", and works in collaboration with other federal, state and local agencies to this end.

NEMA's role is meant to supplement the emergency response delivered by the state-level SEMAs.

These agencies exist in most of the 36 states and the FCT is in the process of establishing its own Territorial Emergency Management Agency (TEMA). They usually distribute relief supplies provided by NEMA or the state, manage camps and collect data, but their capacities vary widely across the country and few are able to respond effectively to internal displacement crises. In some cases, state authorities withdraw their support and funding for SEMAs that are not fully functional, and rely instead on ad hoc emergency committees backed up by NEMA (IDMC interviews with NEMA and FCT officials, May 2013).

NCFR works to support IDPs after the emergency phase in their search for durable solutions. It assists the most vulnerable communities with the reconstruction or repair of infrastructure such as homes, clinics, schools and boreholes, and by providing livelihood support including boats, fishing nets and farming tools. It has also commissioned training centres for IDPs in several states (NCFR, 2013 workplan, on file with IDMC). NCFR's activities are meant to complement NEMA's and be coordinated with them. In reality, however, this rarely happens, in part because of a lack of clarity surrounding NCFR's mandate.

NRCS is present throughout the country, and maintains branches and volunteers in each state. It has rapid response capacity for humanitarian crises and provides relief supplies. It is also building flood-resistant homes for three communities in Kogi state, but does not plan to repeat the project elsewhere (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013).

Civil society organisations assist or support IDPs, but the most common providers are host families and communities, even though their own means are limited. For example, in the absence of any state assistance, a local community association provided IDPs living in Daudu camp with rice, beans and oil (NRCS, May 2013, on file with IDMC) and in Cross Rivers state, a local chief made ar-

rangements for displaced children to attend his town's schools ([Punch](#), 2 February 2013).

Organisations such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) regularly denounce the violation of the rights of people displaced by forced evictions. NHRC has also succeeded in getting planned evictions in Lagos, Rivers state and FCT postponed as a result of a national enquiry ([NHRC](#), 20 May 2013). Evicted IDPs almost never receive assistance or compensation, though in one rare example to the contrary, the Osun state authorities did compensate people displaced by a road construction project ([Punch](#), 7 January 2013).

New platforms for coordination

In 2012, NEMA developed a national contingency plan designed to improve humanitarian coordination during the first ten days of a crisis. The plan notably established working group sectors, created with the aim of bringing together the relevant national and international entities. The sectors are led by national ministries or agencies in coordination with relevant UN bodies ([NEMA](#), National Contingency Plan, 2012-2013). They include camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), food and nutrition, health and sexual reproductive health, protection and security, basic education, water and sanitation, emergency shelter and essential household items, and logistics and telecommunications.

NEMA is the coordinating agency for CCCM, emergency shelter and essential household items and logistics. In August, NHRC will take the lead on protection and is currently developing a referral system for violations of IDPs' rights. It will receive such data from staff in the field and pass cases on to the relevant authorities, but details are scant and no launch date for the system has been set (IDMC interview with NHRC, May 2013).

The new sector approach is a promising development in terms of coordinating responses to

displacement, but it is too early to tell how much difference it will make to the situation on the ground. There is also still a need for similar coordination in addressing IDPs' medium and long-term needs in their search for durable solutions. The adoption of a national policy is crucial for the clarification of roles and responsibilities at all levels of government and among the international humanitarian and development organisations taking part in the new system.

International response

Until 2012, UN agencies, international NGOs and donors focused primarily on development programmes, and few organisations responded to the emergency humanitarian needs arising from forced displacement. In the last quarter of 2012, however, a humanitarian country team was officially set up. The UN and NGOs have also engaged with NEMA in the development of a humanitarian action plan for 2013 to 2015, which aims to address the impact of recurrent flooding, drought and conflict ([UNICEF](#), February 2012). The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, visited the country in June 2013 ([OCHA](#), June 2013).

Nigeria has received more than \$6.4 million from the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) to assist people affected by the 2012 floods ([OCHA](#), March 2013). Of the total, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) received some \$1.4 million to distribute essential household items, which enabled it to officially engage on issues affecting IDPs in Nigeria. UNHCR deployed two protection officers in 2012 to work on internal displacement issues and it is collaborating with FCT in setting up TEMA (IDMC interview with UNHCR, May 2013). It has also been instrumental in setting up the protection sector working group and enhancing stakeholders' capacity for protection monitoring with the aim of addressing major gaps in response. Training for

state-level entities to facilitate field-based monitoring and information management has been organised with IDMC's support. UNHCR has also supported capacity building in the area of CCCM, and there are now 20 internationally recognised trainers in the country.

The progress both national and international entities have made over the past years in their work to protect and assist IDPs in Nigeria is encouraging. That said, the absence of a law and policy framework that clearly defines roles and responsibilities has, and will continue to, hamper the coordination of humanitarian and development efforts to mitigate the effects of internal displacement. Such framework is also essential to a holistic and comprehensive approach to supporting IDPs in their search for durable solutions, and to prepare for and prevent future displacement.

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is a world leader in the monitoring and analysis of the causes, effects and responses to internal displacement. IDMC advocates for better responses to the needs of the millions of people worldwide who are displaced within their own countries as a consequence of conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters. It is also at the forefront of efforts to promote greater respect for the basic rights of internally displaced people (IDPs). IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

What we do:

- Promote appropriate responses to internal displacement through targeted advocacy
- Provide timely, accessible and relevant information on internal displacement worldwide
- Develop research and analysis to help shape policies and practices that have positive outcomes for IDPs
- Provide training and support to country-based policy-makers and practitioners with a responsibility to protect IDPs

Who do we target?

IDMC is best placed to effect positive change for IDPs through advocacy to influence the decisions and practices of duty bearers and all those with a responsibility or capacity to promote or fulfil the rights of IDPs.

How do we operate?

As information on internal displacement is often controversial and politically sensitive, IDMC must continue to operate and be seen to operate as an independent and effective global monitor of this widespread phenomenon.

IDMC has become an indispensable resource for anyone seeking impartial data and analysis on internal displacement, independent of political or operational considerations. www.internal-displacement.org

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