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NIGERIA

Multiple displacement crises overshadowed by Boko Haram

Attacks by Islamist Boko Haram militants increased dramatically from mid-2014, causing an unprecedented protection crisis in north-eastern Nigeria. The insurgency has reportedly forced 1.5 million people to flee to other parts of the country and at least another 150,000 have taken refuge in neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Government counter-insurgency operations have also contributed to insecurity and displacement, both in the north-east and in neighbouring countries.

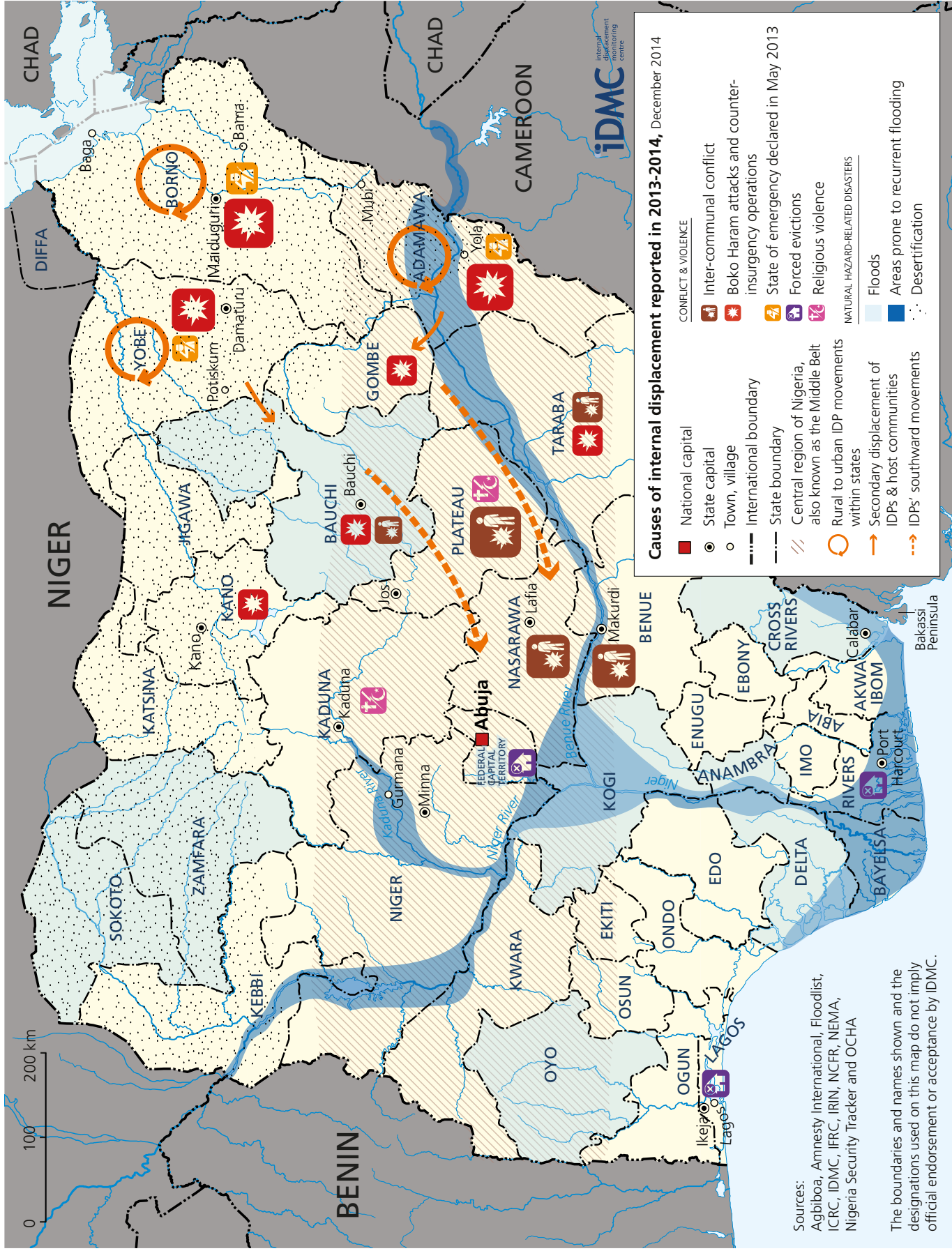
International attention has tended to focus on Boko Haram's brutality, but inter-communal conflicts, flooding, desertification and forced evictions have also caused significant internal displacement. With presidential and parliamentary elections due in February 2015, there are fears of recurrence of the violence and displacement that accompanied the 2011 polls, particularly in the north of the country.

Internally displaced people (IDPs), the vast majority of whom are women and children, face a range of threats to their physical safety and restrictions on their freedom of movement. Many are traumatised by the violence that prompted them to flee and are afraid to return. Those whose homes have been damaged or destroyed by conflict and flooding have nowhere to go back to. Most internally displaced families live and share resources with host communities.

Efforts by national and state governments to address their needs are inconsistent, and poor access means support from international agencies and Nigerian civil society is also limited. People who live in or near camps receive some assistance, but often not enough to meet their food and other basic needs. They also tend to live in cramped and unhygienic conditions. The most vulnerable IDPs – the young, older people and those with disabilities – are most at risk. There is a lack of strategy guiding humanitarian assistance and only limited discussion of durable solutions at both the national and local level.



This group of men left Borno state with their families around March 20 after their village in Bama district was attacked by armed insurgents. Their homes were burnt and they were forced to identify Boko Haram members in the group. When no one owned up, they were released, with the exception of 18 men who were shot in the back. Photo: UNHCR / H. Caux / April 2014



The full impact of displacement in Nigeria is unclear, because figures are often only available after larger-scale crises. Estimates suggest that violence and disasters caused by natural hazards have forced a staggering number of people to flee their homes, but information is anecdotal and primarily about the minority of IDPs who live in camps. Data collection is inconsistent and unreliable, leading to an alarming lack of understanding of displacement dynamics, and fragmented and inadequate responses.

Both the Nigerian authorities and the international community have focused disproportionately on north-east Nigeria. The current emphasis on short-term, emergency response also prevents understanding of how vulnerabilities increase with each cycle of displacement, how to address the causes of displacement and how to facilitate IDPs' achievement of durable solutions.

Nigeria ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention, in May 2012 and rewrote a draft policy on IDPs to incorporate its provisions. As of December 2014, however, the federal cabinet had yet to adopt the policy, despite persistent advocacy on the issue. The failure to define roles and responsibilities continues to hamper the humanitarian and development response, a holistic approach towards durable solutions and efforts to prevent and prepare for future displacement.

Background

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and its largest economy (BBC, 6 April 2014). It has a rapidly growing population of at least 160 million. More than half are from three main ethnic groups – the Hausa-Fulani in the north, Igbo in the south-east and Yoruba in the south-west. The remainder are divided into nearly 400 other groups (UNISDR, A.R. Mustapha, 2006).

There are huge territorial, population and economic disparities between the country's 36 states. Endemic corruption, political instability and bad governance mean that many parts of the population fail to benefit from the country's strong economic growth and its vast oil and mineral resources. Nigeria ranked 144th in Transparency International's corruption index for 2013 (TI, 2013). More than 70 per cent of the population are classified as living in poverty or absolute poverty, with a higher concentration of both groups in the north-east, where Boko Haram is most active (ICG, 3 April 2014; Africa Confidential, April 2014). Poverty, rising inequality and social frustration have spawned other militant groups, which derive support based on ethnic and religious identities. They include the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (ICG, April 2014).

Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, successive governments have failed to adequately address growing insecurity. Thousands of people have died in recurring inter-communal conflicts and politically motivated violence, which have triggered waves of displacement in the north-east, north-central and Middle Belt regions (ICG, April 2014). The country ranked 11th on the Minority Rights Group's country index of civilians at risk for 2014 (Minority Rights Group, July 2014). Ethnic militias, separatist groups and faith-based movements have mobilised to defend their communities and to conduct violent campaigns to assert cultural, religious or ethnic dominance and control resources in the vacuum left by authorities' weakening presence (ICG, April 2014).

Causes of displacement

The causes of displacement are multi-faceted, complex and often overlapping. Inter-communal clashes fuelled by ethnic and religious tensions flare on a near to weekly basis throughout the

Middle Belt, and an increase in Boko Haram attacks and abductions has uprooted families throughout the north-east. The military's tactics have caused further displacement as civilians flee pre-emptively. Tens of thousands were displaced during post-electoral protests in 2011, and there are fears of similar violence in the run-up to presidential and parliamentary elections in February 2015. More than two million slum-dwellers and other marginalised people have been forcibly evicted from their homes in urban centres.

Nigeria is prone to frequent flooding, which led to the world's second largest displacement caused by a disaster in 2012. State authorities in northern Nigeria have also recently acknowledged that thousands of people have been displaced as a result of desertification.

Inter-communal conflict in the Middle Belt

Communal clashes along ethnic and religious fault lines have fostered a climate of instability and violence throughout the north and the Middle Belt, the dividing line between the Muslim north and Christian south. Data is limited, but hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to have been displaced as violence has increased over the past 15 years (ICG, 17 December 2012). Conflicts are fuelled by myriad factors including ethno-religious disputes, criminality, cattle rustling, land disputes and tensions between pastoralists and farmers.

Episodes of inter-communal violence in the Middle Belt states of Plateau, Taraba, Benue and Nasarawa have left more than 400 people dead in 2014, and caused unknown amounts of displacement and destruction (Nigeria Security Tracker). In the east and north-east, more than 85,000 people fled their homes between January and August, including in states affected by Boko Haram such as Bauchi and Taraba (OCHA, December 2013; SRP, August 2014).

Tensions have been aggravated by government policies that effectively make millions of

Nigerians second-class citizens by discriminating against "non-indigenes" or "settlers", those unable to prove roots linking them to the original inhabitants of an area (HRW, 2006 and 2009). The principle behind "indigenisation" was to protect the identity, rights and interests of the country's numerous minority groups, but it has become a powerful means of exclusion under which non-indigenes are denied access to already limited resources such as education, land, participation in political affairs and public sector jobs (HRW, 2006 and 2009).

Religious, sectarian and electoral violence

Both religion and ethnicity are politically manipulated for populist causes. Ethnicity has played a significant role in religious conflicts in northern Nigeria, where sectarian groups have exploited tensions between Hausa settlers and Fulani indigenes. The religious dimension may have been misconstrued as the primary driver of violence, when in reality disenfranchisement and inequality may be the main causes (Kwaja, 2011).

The politics of religion in Nigeria is also evident in the sharia law debate that engulfed the country after its return to democracy in 1999, which also created a space for the expression of ethno-religious demands suppressed by years of repressive military rule (Duruji, 2010). There has since been an exponential rise in religious violence, with the vast majority taking place in northern Nigeria, where it flares regularly in flashpoint areas such as the cities of Kaduna and Zaria in Kaduna state, mainly in the form of urban riots (Agbiboa, 2014).

There have been clashes between Muslims and Christians, violence between Islamic sects and fighting with members of the police force. Religiously and ethnically mixed populations in urban areas of Kaduna state have been particularly affected, as have those in north-eastern states, where insurgent groups have flourished in recent decades (Agbiboa, 2014). Violent confrontations between Christians and Muslims in 2000

displaced thousands of people as attempts were made to implement sharia law in Kaduna state following its introduction in neighbouring Zamfara. In 2008, ethnic and sectarian electoral violence between Hausa settlers and Afizere, Anaguta and Berom indigenes displaced more than 250,000 people in Jos, the capital of Plateau state. In January 2010, 18,000 people fled from Jos and elsewhere in Plateau to neighbouring states.

The violence that followed the 2011 presidential election in northern Nigeria left 170 Christians and 500 Muslims dead, and nearly 65,000 people were displaced in three days of violent protests across 12 states. It began with protests by supporters of the opposition Congress for Progressive Change Party, after the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party, was re-elected. Police were generally unable to control the riots that broke out, despite accusations that the security forces used excessive force ([HRW](#), 16 May 2011).

Boko Haram attacks in north-east Nigeria

Chronic poverty, corruption, abuses by the security forces and longstanding impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations have combined to create fertile ground for the emergence of militant armed groups over the past decade (Agbiboa, 2014). By far the most significant is Boko Haram, Islamist militants whose name loosely translates as "western education is forbidden". Formally *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, or People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad, it has systematically sought to destabilise the Nigerian state and impose sharia in the north-east of the country since 2009 ([ICG](#), 3 April 2014). It is thought that more than 7,000 civilians have been killed since, and as many as 1.5 million displaced, with the highest number of attacks taking place in Borno state ([IRIN](#), 28 November 2014).

Boko Haram began its insurgency with assaults on members of the security services, politicians,

civil servants and other authority figures in the northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe. It started to expand its operations in 2010, when it bombed buildings in Jos, and has since acquired tanks, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons and sub-machine guns (Africa in Transition, [19 September 2014](#); [8 October 2014](#)). It has pushed further south, bombing police and UN offices in Abuja in 2011, and its targets have come to include schools, churches and places that sell alcohol ([AI](#), 24 January 2012; [HRW](#), 7 March 2012).

Following the imposition of a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states in 2012, attacks on civilian targets increased dramatically ([Washington Post](#), 10 July 2013). In July 2013, militants set fire to a student dormitory near Potiskum in Yobe state, burning some inside alive and shooting others as they tried to flee ([IRIN](#), 8 July 2013). Between 2013 and mid-2014, Boko Haram destroyed 211 schools in Borno state, killing an unknown number of students and teachers and leading to the closure of all state-funded education facilities there in March 2014 ([UNICEF](#), 23 June 2014).

The group has issued public demands that Christians leave northern Nigeria. It has burned down churches and killed worshippers. It has abducted Christian women and girls and threatened them with violence in order to force their conversion to Islam or marriage to its members. Men who refuse to convert have been killed ([ICC](#), 5 August 2013; [HRW](#), 27 October 2014). It has also attacked traditional Muslim leaders who have condemned its tactics, and targeted their families ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014).

Boko Haram has been growing in ambition and capability. In August 2014, it proclaimed a caliphate in captured territory including ten major towns in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014). Attempts at negotiations have stalled as a result of its fractured leadership and mistrust (Agbiboa, 2014).

The group has abducted at least 500 women and girls in north-eastern Nigeria since 2009, and large-scale abductions have escalated since early 2014 ([Watchlist](#), 4 September 2014). Such tactics constitute a serious abuse of human rights and a form of forced displacement. IDPs cite fear of abduction as a key factor underscoring their decision to flee ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014).

The abduction of 276 teenage girls from Chibok in April 2014 has been the largest single incident so far, and 219 of those captured are still unaccounted for. At the time of the attack, the local population had been swollen by the arrival of IDPs fleeing Boko Haram violence in surrounding villages. The Chibok abductions emboldened the group to step up the tactic, both to instil terror and raise revenue from ransom demands ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014).

IDPs fleeing Boko Haram are increasingly vulnerable to violence and attack, and their coping strategies are limited. As attacks in rural areas have intensified, many residents have fled preemptively.

Government response to Boko Haram

The government has been criticised for the security forces' lack of presence and their ineffectiveness, which has led to the formation of state-sponsored vigilante groups. They have also been accused of heavy-handed tactics that cause further displacement, including the extrajudicial killing of more than 600 suspected militants, disappearances, the razing of property in communities thought to harbour Boko Haram fighters and the use of excessive force and physical abuse ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014; [AI](#), 5 August 2014). In some communities, such as Bulabulin Ngarannam and Alajiri in Borno state, people displaced by the military have been unable to return since early 2013. Soldiers have also evicted IDPs sheltering in public buildings such as schools, and used the facilities for military purposes ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014).

State-sponsored 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. They have, however, taken place without adequate consultation, notice, compensation or offers of alternative accommodation, leading to intra-urban displacement and leaving thousands of people homeless. They breach victims' right to adequate housing, constitute arbitrary displacement and often lead to violations of other human rights such as access to health care, education and livelihood opportunities ([AI](#), 2011; [IDMC](#), June 2012).

Recurrent floods

Nigeria is prone to recurrent flooding, particularly in lowlands and river basins where vulnerable communities live in unplanned informal settlements. Displacement is caused not only by the rains and overflowing water courses, but also by the mismanaged release of water from dam reservoirs, both in Nigeria and countries upstream such as Cameroon ([Daily Trust](#), 7 October 2012). Natural drainage channels are blocked by the failure to maintain infrastructure and dumping of waste in slum areas ([Floodlist](#), 2 July 2014).

The country suffered its most devastating floods for 40 years between July and October 2012, displacing millions of people on the vast plains of the Benue and Niger rivers and their tributaries across 33 of the country's 36 states ([IDMC Global Estimates](#) 2012). In 2013, floods displaced 117,000 people from many of the same areas, with Bauchi, Kogi and Zamfara states worst affected ([IFRC](#), October 2013; [OCHA](#), December 2013). Those displaced, including returnees, continue to need help in rebuilding their livelihoods, improving their food security, maintaining their shelters and their pursuit of durable solutions ([IRIN](#), 14 February 2014).

In its 2014 flood outlook, the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) predicted that 23 states would experience floods in 2014 over a greater area than in 2013 ([NIHSA](#), 16 June 2014). It predicted coastal flooding caused by tidal surges in Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos due states, and flash and urban flooding in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Oshogbo, Sokoto, Maiduguri and Ibadan. In fact, there has been less flooding in 2014 than NIHSA foresaw, and inaccurate warnings have prevented farmers from cultivating as intensively as the might have done in some areas, which in turn has reduced food stocks ([IRIN](#), 14 February 2014).

Flooding caused by heavy rainfall was limited to the southern states of Anambra, Cross Rivers, Delta and Oyo states in June 2014, causing at least 20 deaths and the loss of public infrastructure and more than 100 homes ([Floodlist](#), 28 June 2014; [2 July 2014](#)). A month later, riverine flooding destroyed 50 houses and agricultural land in Sokoto state, displacing around 500 people ([OCHA](#), 30 July 2014).

Desertification

Desertification caused by increased pressure on the environment drives displacement in at least 11 northern states ([This Day](#), 16 August 2014). Many of the same areas are also affected by inter-communal conflict, the activity of armed groups and counter-insurgency operations. The high cost of fuel for cooking makes vulnerable IDPs reliant on felling trees for firewood, which contributes further to environmental degradation, as do their over-cultivation and over-grazing of land.

During the first summit on desertification in the north, Zamfara state authorities acknowledged that thousands of people had been displaced as a result. State and federal governments' recognition of the worsening poverty and food security that deforestation causes contributed to the dedication of funds in May 2013 for the Great Green Wall – an African Union initiative to ad-

dress land degradation and desertification in the Sahel and Sahara ([Sunday Trust](#), 20 November 2011; [Premium Times](#), 24 May 2013; [Daily Trust](#), 26 February 2014). Despite their commitments, however, only a limited amount of the funds pledged have been released. Following pressure from the Northern States Governors Forum (NSGF) and the Nigerian Frontline Action Initiative on Desertification, an interim office of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall was established in September 2014 ([Premium Times](#), 9 September 2014).

Displacement figures and patterns

Cumulative figures for internal displacement are provided by the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR). In February 2014, it reported that there were 3.3 million IDPs in the country as of 31 December 2013. It has not provided figures for 2014. The Presidential Initiative on the North-east (PINE) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that Boko Haram had displaced 1.5 million people in the north-east ([OCHA](#), 23 September 2014). No independent estimates are provided, either by the UN resident humanitarian coordinator's office or the Abuja regional branch of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

There is a lack of comprehensive information on IDPs' situations in many parts of the country, particularly those living in protracted displacement, but the number of people displaced by conflict in the Middle Belt is thought to be as high as in the north-east (IDMC interviews, October 2014). The continuing shortage of accurate and reliable data has resulted in a distorted picture of IDPs' assistance needs and an alarming lack of understanding of the country's displacement dynamics on the part of national authorities and the international community. Only in areas affected by Boko Haram has better data collection led to an improved understanding of displacement patterns.

Three patterns emerge in such areas:

- IDPs flee to the neighbouring states of Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba, and to central Nigeria and the Middle Belt region. Many of these areas are also affected by conflict and violence, increasing competition for resources between IDPs and host communities in flashpoint areas.
- People flee from rural to urban areas within their home states, increasing population stress on towns and cities and raising further security concerns. IDPs and host communities fear Boko Haram incursions in areas outside the group's traditional areas of operation, in Adamawa state to the south for example.
- IDPs and host communities affected by violence and a lack of access to basic needs including food, water and emergency shelter are forced into secondary displacement. The ongoing depletion of community resources and household coping mechanisms increases IDPs' risk and vulnerability with each cycle of displacement.

Data collection challenges

States' capacity to collect data varies widely. The poor condition of roads and communications infrastructure continues to hamper the collection of data on displacement, which is only occasionally disaggregated by age, sex and location. Three organisations primarily collect data on IDPs, but there is no official mechanism to standardise their methodologies or the presentation of their findings.

NEMA and NCFR are making more information available to OCHA. This has increased the circulation of questionable data from government agencies through humanitarian bulletins and regional humanitarian snapshots. NEMA collects information on IDPs who seek refuge in camps and camp-like settings and who receive assistance via the country's state emergency management agencies (SEMAs). This includes household size, place of origin and, in some cases, vulnerability factors such as age or disability and groups at higher risk such

a female and child-headed households. SEMAs do not have enough staff or equipment to conduct assessments, nor do they receive standardised training from NEMA on methodology.

Six north-eastern states will benefit from an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) capacity-building project in 2014 and 2015. By providing IT resources, technical support and staff training, IOM hopes to improve data collection to allow comparisons to be made and trends to be traced (IDMC interview with IOM, October 2014). It has also started planning for capacity-building programmes on data collection with SEMAs in the north-eastern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba.

NCFR area offices use a standardised form to collect data in camps, but its presence and resources are limited and it relies heavily on information provided by other organisations. This is presented at periodic meetings of the government harmonisation committee on displacement statistics, a body established in 2014 to improve reporting coherence among government agencies, particularly NEMA and NCFR (IDMC interview with NCFR, October 2014).

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, October 2014). NRCS has been requested to submit its data to the government harmonisation committee in order to triangulate data (IDMC interview with NEMA, May 2013).

Data collection efforts focus on camps and camp-like settings, but most IDPs find refuge with host families and communities. Providing shelter for people in need is part of Nigerian culture. Many are loath to allow relatives to stay in camps, where large households lack space and privacy (IDMC interview with NCFR, October 2014). There is

almost no publicly available data or information on these IDPs or their hosts, despite a significant increase in data collection, profiling and registration by international NGOs in 2014. There is still a lack of coordination among humanitarian agencies for the collation and analysis of independent data. Estimates provided by government agencies of the number of people displaced during crises are sometimes produced by simply counting destroyed and damaged homes in places from where people have fled.

Government estimates rarely capture return movements, progress towards durable solutions or protracted displacement. Improving data collection and management during all phases of displacement, and the complete profiling of displaced communities in need of emergency interventions in the north-east, must be prioritised in the run-up to the February 2015 elections. Otherwise, mass displacement may further distort the picture of secondary and cyclical displacement caused by desertification, inter-communal violence, Boko Haram's activities and electoral violence. Gains made in data collection and sharing during 2014 will be at risk if the information is not used to revise figures for 2015 programming.

Cyclical displacement and vulnerability

Information on people displaced a number of times and their coping strategies are scarce. It is known that many states in the north and the Middle Belt experience recurrent conflict and violence, which causes frequent and cyclical displacement each time tensions flare. Those households affected do not receive assistance tailored to their increased vulnerability and reduced coping strategies. They are often unable to recover from losses resulting from their displacement or access assistance in their pursuit of durable solutions during periods of relative stability (IDMC interview with NRCS, October 2014).

The current focus on short-term and ad hoc emergency response prevents an understanding of 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

Threats to life and freedom of movement

IDPs face a range of threats to their physical safety and restrictions on their freedom of movement. Boko Haram's proclamation of a caliphate in areas of Adamawa and Borno states has trapped people, and there are reports of summary executions of those seeking to flee (IDMC interview with HRW, October 2014). As Boko Haram and the security forces fight to control main roads, fleeing civilians are often forced into forested areas, where many have lost their way and died of hunger and thirst. They also risk being mistaken by the security forces for militants on the move. The fact that IDPs often have to pay to pass through Boko Haram checkpoints also steers them towards the forests rather than moving to areas where they might be more likely to access assistance (BBC, 20 May 2013; IDMC interview with OCHA, October 2014). The fact that many people in northern Nigeria do not have civil documents can further complicate their movement when they come into contact with state and local authorities (IDMC interview with HRW, October 2014).

Violence against women and children

Sexual violence is a feature of Boko Haram attacks on communities, as is the systematic abuse perpetrated against women and girls the group abducts (HRW, 27 October 2014). Data on the extent of gender-based violence (GBV) among displaced communities is highly unreliable. Many incidents go unreported, in part because victims fear stigmatisation. The number of IDPs, and particularly women and children, living camps has increased during 2014 following the surge in displacement

and exhaustion of host communities' resources. Women and girls face a greater risk of GBV as a result of their displacement, whether in camps or in host communities, and particularly at night. Female and child-headed households face increased risks from insecurity during displacement.

Vulnerable household members who cannot be accommodated by host families because of the pressure on host communities' resources are also particularly at risk. Some displaced families have had to house their children with separate hosts (IDMC interview with IRC, October 2014). Assessments in September 2014 indicated that vulnerable IDPs including children displaced in Yola town, Adamawa state, have been forced to engage in survival sex to meet their basic needs. There are also reports of camp "discipline committees" meting out corporal punishment to displaced women (IDMC interview with OCHA, October 2014). The lack of organised management in many new camps and informal settlements makes abuses easier to perpetrate and more difficult to monitor.

Young men are at risk of forced recruitment into Boko Haram's ranks in Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger. Self-defence groups including the Civilian Joint Task Force, which was formed to protect Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, are also reported to have used child fighters ([Watchlist](#), 4 September 2014).

Forced evictions

In recent years the governments of Lagos and Rivers states have forcibly removed people from informal settlements built on land earmarked for development projects. Demolition squads with bulldozers have been 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 rely on survival sex to meet their families' basic needs ([AI](#), July 2012).

Participation in public affairs

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, or Kampala Convention, which Nigeria ratified in 2012, provides for IDPs' participation in elections. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has not, however, established systems for the timely transfer of IDPs' voter registration from their areas of origin to their areas of displacement. Nor has it addressed the need for the widespread replacement of IDPs' voting cards lost during their flight. In November 2014, Borno's electoral commissioner announced that INEC planned to make provisions for IDPs to be able to vote in the state, but INEC's Abuja headquarters has not confirmed any such arrangement ([People's Daily](#), 13 November 2014). INEC has argued that an amendment to the 2010 Electoral Act is required to allow IDPs to register to vote in their areas of displacement (IDMC phone interview with INEC, October 2014). If this does not happen before the February 2015 elections it is likely that millions of IDPs will be disenfranchised. Plans to create 30,000 new polling stations were suspended in November 2014 ([Daily Times](#), 12 November 2014).

Assistance needs

Lack of adequate and safe shelter

Access to adequate shelter is the most immediate need IDPs face in the initial stages of displacement. In the Middle Belt and parts of the north-

east, recurrent ethnic and inter-communal clashes frequently cause displacement as a result of the destruction of homes, schools and markets ([SRP](#), August 2014). In areas where Boko Haram is active, IDPs may be unable to access their areas of habitual residence that the group has occupied, or they may choose not to return out of fear. The destruction of property and public infrastructure has also been a feature of Boko Haram attacks in recent years ([HRW](#), 27 October 2014). The longer IDPs remain in displacement, the greater the risk that their property will become damaged, destroyed or occupied.

The majority of IDPs in Nigeria take refuge in host communities. This may involve staying in the homes of family or friends, paying for temporary accommodation or seeking refuge in makeshift camp-like settings such as schools, sports centres, churches, mosques and university campuses. When none of these options are available, IDPs may be forced to shelter in abandoned buildings, on the streets of urban centres or on the outskirts of villages. Makeshift camps are often grossly inadequate, becoming quickly overcrowded and unsustainable (IDMC interview with OCHA, October 2014). Some IDPs have no access to safe shelter and take refuge in the bush ([IRIN](#), 7 May 2013).

The homes of many vulnerable communities are damaged or destroyed by floods on an almost annual basis. In the absence of other options, many simply await their inevitable displacement when the rainy season arrives. Some, however, have taken preventive measures. Inhabitants of Gurmana, a village in Niger state, asked the authorities to provide them with tents so they could pre-emptively relocate their families and belongings. This would have helped them avoid disrupting their children's education by occupying the primary school, as they had previously been forced to do. Months after making the request, however, they had received no reply. Despite the authorities having previously agreed to permanently relocate the village to higher ground, they

have received no support to do so (IDMC visit to Gurmana, May 2013).

People forcibly evicted who are unable to find shelter with family and friends are left homeless unless they receive compensation or financial assistance from the authorities. Representatives from the Badia East slum held lengthy negotiations with the Lagos state government between February 2013 and January 2014, but no relief was forthcoming for those evicted. The resulting lack of shelter led to a severe deterioration in their living conditions and health, including deaths ([AI](#), 19 August 2014).

Basic needs unmet

IDPs are often unable to exercise their basic rights to food and 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. Assistance for those living in camps, when provided, is inadequate. The destruction of property, crops and stores of food at the time of displacement is a major driver of food insecurity among IDPs. During the early phases of displacement, state governments and aid agencies provide basic food items through SEMAs, but supplies are often quickly exhausted. IDPs may then be forced to turn to their hosts for help in meeting their basic needs.

Boko Haram has disrupted livelihood activities and markets and reduced trade flows. Staples and other basic commodities have become scarcer and prices have risen, preventing IDPs from buying basic foodstuffs. Most are food insecure and host families are overstretched. An inter-agency humanitarian needs assessment carried out in the north-east in mid-2014 found that it was common practice for households to ration food portions as a means of getting by (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014).

State security measures have also disrupted rural markets and transport, contributing further to

the food shortages of both IDPs and their hosts (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). Trade at major urban markets in Maiduguri, Potiskum, Damaturu, Mubi and Yola has been halved and many peri-urban markets have closed. Vulnerable households including IDPs in the worst affected areas of southern Borno and Yobe states and northern Adamawa state face phase three or crisis level food insecurity ([FEWS NET](#), September 2014).

Poor health and hygiene

IDPs often have only minimal access to health services, and their lack of access is of particular concern given that the overwhelming majority are women and children. Most health facilities in areas of the north-east affected by conflict were closed as of mid-2014 as a result of insecurity and the displacement of staff ([FEWS NET](#), 1 August 2014). Some facilities have been damaged or destroyed during conflict, or deliberately targeted by Boko Haram ([USAID](#), 30 June 2014). As of March 2014, only 37 per cent of facilities in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states were functional ([OCHA](#), 31 March 2014).

Health facilities in the north-east were already poorly resourced before the current crisis, and additional resources have not been provided to meet the needs of populations swollen by displacement (IDMC interviews, October 2014). In some communities there are not enough facilities or staff to meet even the basic health needs of IDPs and their hosts. Primary health care services in particular have been overwhelmed by the recent influxes of IDPs.

The primary obstacle in accessing health care for many IDPs is their lack of resources, including to pay for transport to the nearest facilities, which can be some distance away (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). The state has ordered hospitals to treat IDPs free of charge on receipt of a SEMA letter authorising their expenses. SEMAs, however, have failed to reimburse

hospitals, leading them to refuse to accept the organisation's letters in lieu of payment. This has effectively priced IDPs out of medical treatment, given that they have to pay an initial registration fee of 500 naira (\$2.80) plus their consultations and medication costs. There are reported to be few if any medical supplies in government health facilities in Adamawa state ([USAID](#), 30 July 2014). In communities without health programmes run by international NGOs, many IDPs have no access to health care at all (IDMC interviews, October 2014).

Outbreaks of disease and malnutrition rates have increased in areas affected by displacement. The number of cholera cases among IDPs and host communities has risen exponentially, with 26,204 cases and 404 deaths reported between January and July 2014, compared with 167 cases during the same time period in 2013 ([UNICEF](#), 28 July 2014). The lack of water and sanitation facilities raises serious concerns about the outbreak spreading. Global acute malnutrition rates in Yobe and Borno states were 15.5 per cent and 13.6 per cent respectively as of August 2014 ([FEWS NET](#), August 2014).

IDPs and host communities in the north-east have only limited access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, leading to a decline in health and hygiene among both IDPs and their host communities. Public latrines in informal camp-like settings such as schools are often non-existent or unusable (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). Defecation and the disposal of children's waste in the open is common, particularly in urban or densely populated peri-urban host communities (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). Open defecation raises health, security and dignity issues, particularly for women and girls, and creates tension with host communities. The contamination of water sources has contributed to cholera outbreaks in a number of displacement sites in Biu, Borno state, in 2014 ([SRP](#), 5 August 2014).

Boreholes, hand pumps and unprotected wells dug by hand are the main source of drinking water for communities displaced by Boko Haram. When IDPs flee away from populated areas or are trapped in the bush, they may have to resort to drinking from ponds, rivers and streams which are often also used by animals, polluted and conducive to the spread of human and livestock diseases. Many displaced women and children have to walk long distances to fetch water, and they have had to travel further as pressure on local sources has increased as a result of influxes of people fleeing Boko Haram attacks in 2014 (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). Water shortages are a cause of tension between IDPs and their host communities. Boko Haram militants deliberately destroyed water points and damaged pipes and equipment in their attacks on the towns of Benesheik and Minok towns in Borno state to prevent IDPs from returning to the area (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014).

Environmental hygiene among displaced households is also poor as a result of overcrowded conditions and shortages of water and other materials. This is of particular concern to women and teenage girls who face the challenge of maintaining menstrual hygiene in very constrained circumstances.

No access to education

With many IDPs sheltering in schools and humanitarian assistance often limited to life-saving interventions, displaced children are generally unable to pursue their education. Boko Haram attacks against schools since 2012 and state governments' closure of facilities in the worst affected areas, such as Borno state, have drastically decreased access. All schools in the towns of Baga, Bama, Jajeri, Umarari Garnam, Mai Malari, Mungono and Gamboru were forced to close between February 2012 and June 2013. Unidentified gunmen destroyed 14 schools in the Borno state capital of Maiduguri between January and April 2013, and at least 256 were destroyed

across the state (AI, 4 October 2013; Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). All state schools in Borno were closed in March 2014.

IDPs and members of the security forces occupying schools have damaged and in some cases destroyed infrastructure. A surge in displacement in northern Adamawa state during the July to September 2014 holidays led to a large number of IDPs sheltering in schools, which prevented classes from resuming at the start of the academic year.

Attendance rates have declined dramatically in the north-east. Even in areas where schools have remained open, many children, including IDPs, do not attend for fear of attack and abduction. The abduction of students in IDPs' home areas has made parents wary of sending their children to school, even in the comparative safety of the areas of refuge in neighbouring states. Parents also tend to prioritise basic needs such as shelter and food over education (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014).

Displaced children's access to education varies from state to state. They are often refused attendance at host community schools that do not have the facilities or staff to take on more students. During the first half of 2014, admission was denied to many IDP children because the school year had already started (Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). In Gombe state, schools have reportedly been largely unaffected by the influxes of IDPs, but some displaced children were still refused admission.

In Taraba state, schools have been attacked and more than 100 forced to close. Others were open to IDPs, but were suffering severe shortages of materials. Displaced children in Baluchi state have been able to enrol in host community schools, but overstretched resources have lowered the quality of education for all. Classrooms are overcrowded, under-resourced and under-staffed

(Multi-Sectoral Assessment, May-June 2014). IDPs' lack of financial resources and the distance their children need to travel to get to school are further obstacles to their education.

In some areas, IDPs living in camps or in host communities near camps and large distribution centres have attended Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes provided by local agencies supported by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The coverage of such programmes, however, is unknown. EiE programmes are an emergency response to deliver life-saving health and hygiene messages, psychosocial support and supervision for vulnerable children. They cannot be seen as a substitute for formal education or as a means of displaced children catching up on lost schooling.

Obstacles to durable solutions

Given the focus on short-term humanitarian responses, few resources have been dedicated to the pursuit of durable solutions for IDPs via their return, local integration or sustainable settlement elsewhere in the country. This, combined with the absence of countrywide monitoring, means that only limited information is available on IDPs living in protracted displacement. The information that does exist suggests that they still have substantial needs, particularly in terms of food security, shelter and livelihoods.

Damaged and destroyed property

IDPs whose property has been damaged or destroyed are generally unable to afford the cost of reconstruction. Those whose livelihoods are closely linked to their property, such as farmers or people running small businesses from their homes, are particularly affected, but little is known about what happens 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 au-

thorities. Unless they receive financial or material support, however, most will not be in a position to make the move (IDMC interview with NRCS, May 2013).

Victims of forced evictions are often left homeless. Community efforts to seek redress for displacement and the financial losses caused by evictions in 2013 ended with only limited financial assistance being paid. Community representatives from Badia East highlight the cyclical nature of housing insecurity and the continued risk of forced eviction from informal dwellings in urban areas. They also say that evictions are not carried out in line with legal and procedural safeguards, and that those affected are not sufficiently compensated. Residents of Badia East who could not produce a land title or evidence of legal ownership for the property demolished in February 2013 have received little support. Most of those displaced have had to move to other slums and fear further eviction ([AI](#), 19 August 2014).

Lack of livelihood opportunities

The loss of farmland, livestock and tools means many IDPs are unable to resume their livelihoods after displacement and most receive no form of assistance to do so. In many cases, farming and grazing land is not available during displacement, so IDPs may have been unable to farm since their flight.

Many conflicts between farmers and herders are fuelled in part by the lack of available land for cultivation and grazing, and in several northern states much farmland is being lost to desertification ([Vanguard](#), 3 May 2010). The division of communities into indigenous and settler groups also hampers IDPs' access to land. IDPs from rural areas without agricultural livelihoods to return to, and those displaced to towns and cities, generally lack the skills to establish alternative livelihoods. They may face further displacement from informal settlements on the outskirts of cities where they are vulnerable to forced eviction.

National response

National efforts to respond to displacement and mitigate its long-term effects on IDPs and host communities tend to be fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequate. Most assistance IDPs receive, regardless of the cause of their displacement, is provided by host communities (IDMC interview with UNHCR, October 2014). SEMAs have only limited resources and capacity, and there is no law or policy framework setting out responsibilities in terms of IDPs' protection and assistance beyond the initial phase of displacement. In the absence of clear roles for the ministries, departments and agencies involved in any response, they often compete with each other for the limited funding available.

Nigeria ratified the Kampala Convention in May 2012 and submitted a draft policy on IDPs to the cabinet that domesticated its provisions. More than two years later, however, the policy is still to be adopted, and prospects for the introduction of a draft bill to the national assembly seem dim. The cabinet appears to have little enthusiasm for resolving the obstacles hindering its approval, which would pave the way for a parliamentary bill. High-level intervention will be required in 2015 in order to restart the process.

Assistance mechanisms

The response to IDPs' assistance and protection needs is generally implemented via disaster management mechanisms. NEMA is mandated under the 1999 National Emergency Management Agency Act to provide emergency relief to victims of "natural or other disasters" and to assist in their rehabilitation. It tends to oversee the provision of assistance during the first two to four weeks of displacement (IDMC interview with NEMA, May 2013). It has recently expanded its role to coordinate, and in some cases deliver, assistance to displaced communities. NEMA collaborates with federal, state and local agencies, with SEMAs being the primary responders on the ground. The

notable exception to this is in Borno state, where NEMA has responded to the crisis directly during much of 2014.

NEMA's role is meant to supplement the emergency response SEMAs deliver. SEMAs exist in most of the 36 states, usually distributing relief supplies provided by NEMA or the state. SEMAs also manage camps and collect data, but their capacities vary widely and few are able to respond effectively to displacement crises (IDMC interviews with NEMA and FCT, May 2013).

NCFR works to support IDPs after the emergency phase in their pursuit of 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, on file with IDMC). NCFR's activities are meant to complement NEMA's and to 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. Civil society organisations also assist and support IDPs. Organisations such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Social and Economic Rights Action Centre regularly denounce the violation of the rights of people displaced by forced evictions. NHRC has succeeded in getting planned evictions in Lagos and Rivers states and the Federal Capital Territory postponed ([NHRC](#), 20 May 2013).

New platforms for coordination

National agencies improved their coordination of emergency relief to IDPs in late 2013 and 2014. This was largely the result of the growing

displacement crisis in the north-east attracting increased international attention. With support from UN agencies, international humanitarian organisations and NGOs, NEMA published a joint humanitarian action plan (JHAP) in September 2013 to respond to emergencies caused by hazards and conflicts.

The plan established nine sectoral working groups to coordinate data collection and the response to humanitarian needs, with the government, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), IOM, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) co-leading quarterly working groups. It aims to provide a common platform for the government and humanitarian community to address the challenges they face in a principled, timely and coordinated way.

Following the Chibok abductions, in May 2014 the government launched a \$100 million safe schools initiative, with support from the UN, Nigerian business leaders, the African Development Bank and international donors. It aims to pilot 500 safe facilities in the north of the country, with a focus on school and community-level interventions to prevent further attacks, abductions and displacement.

In June 2014, NEMA began working with the inter-agency emergency preparedness and response working group on a contingency plan to prepare for displacement and humanitarian needs that might be caused by violence in the run-up to the February 2015 elections. Fifteen states were identified as potential hotspots for such violence, with widespread displacement anticipated in many states in the north. The plan also predicted that the elections are likely to make the ongoing conflict in the north-east and inter-communal violence in the Middle Belt worse.

An inter-agency strategic response plan for 2014 to 2016 includes the establishment of coordinated protection monitoring by partners of the protection sector working group chaired by

NHRC. The body had not, however, been set up as of October 2014 because of resource gaps. Until a coordinated monitoring mechanism is in place, there will only be limited information on IDPs' protection risks and that which does exist will be anecdotal, time-bound and collected largely from displacement camps.

International response

Until 2012, UN agencies, international NGOs and donors focused primarily on development programmes and few organisations responded to emergency humanitarian needs arising from displacement. In the last quarter of 2012, however, a humanitarian country team led by OCHA was set up. Coordination and joint planning among international responders and their government partners led to the publication of JHAP in September 2013. An overview of humanitarian needs and the 2014 to 2016 strategic response plan were also developed.

Nigeria received \$3.55 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in 2014. This was earmarked for responding to IDPs' needs in the north-east, improving access to protection and assistance for both displaced people and host communities, and strengthening national capacities to prevent and respond to GBV. UN agencies and international NGOs, along with their government partners, requested \$93 million to respond to the humanitarian needs of eight million beneficiaries in the August 2014 revision of the 2014 to 2016 strategic response plan ([SRP](#), August 2014).

The size and robustness of Nigeria's economy has contributed to donor reticence about contributing to the strategic response plan. Contributions to humanitarian financing instruments and bilateral programming remain low (IDMC interviews, October 2014; [FTS](#)). The country's roles as a regional power and Africa's leading oil exporter have also made foreign governments reluctant

to exert meaningful pressure. Funds raised by the Nigerian government, the business community, the Nigerian diaspora and civil society have not been added to those collected through humanitarian financing instruments. There is little or no information on how Nigerian funds raised for emergency relief have been used.

It is encouraging that both national and international entities have made progress in recent years in terms of IDPs' protection and assistance. The absence, however, 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 displacement. Such a framework is also essential to a holistic and comprehensive approach to supporting IDPs in their pursuit of durable solutions, and to prepare for and prevent future displacement.

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC was established in 1998 at the request of the Interagency Standing Committee on humanitarian assistance. Since then, IDMC's unique global function has been recognised and reiterated in annual UN General Assembly resolutions.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

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