



Nigeria

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	Undetermined
Start of current displacement situation	1999
New displacement in 2008	At least 10,000
Returns in 2008	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	154

People have been forcibly displaced across Nigeria, for short or longer periods, since the end of military rule in 1999. Against a background of systematic patterns of inequality and intense competition for resources, Africa's most populous nation has had little success in bringing together its diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. Perhaps the most significant cause of violence has been the entrenched division between people considered indigenous to an area, and those regarded as settlers. Indigenous groups have routinely prevented settlers from owning land or businesses, or accessing jobs and education, inevitably leading to tensions.

There were both new displacements and returns reported in 2008. In August, Nigeria handed over the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon following a 2002 ruling of the International Court of Justice, and thousands of people fled to neighbouring states in Nigeria in fear of repression by Cameroonian security forces. The situation in the Niger Delta deteriorated, as violence between local militia groups and security forces, and inter-militia fighting, led to widespread destruction of property and the displacement of thousands of people. New incidents of post-electoral violence causing displacement were reported in 2008, the worst recorded being the inter-communal unrest in November in the city of Jos.

In Lagos and in Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta, the local governments have displaced an unknown number of residents in measures to combat local militia groups.

Only rough estimates of the number of IDPs and their locations are available, while relatively little is known of the fate of IDPs. Most have been supported by their family or friends, and only some groups have received assistance from local government bodies or the Nigerian Red Cross. However their protection needs appear to have been significant. Human rights organisations have regularly accused the security forces of failing to provide protection during outbreaks of inter-communal violence, while people displaced into makeshift camps in schools or army barracks have had to endure overcrowded and insanitary conditions.

Many children have been unable to go to school, and displaced women and girls have risked sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. Though there is no evidence of

children being used in the armed forces, there have been reports of children being recruited by armed groups, especially in the Niger Delta.

In the absence of any national IDP policy, responses have generally featured gaps in support and competing mandates between institutions. The Federal Ministry of Special Duties coordinates the activities of the three bodies charged with responding to situations of internal displacement: the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) focuses on conflict prevention; the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), which coordinates emergency relief operations, has often supported IDPs in the emergency phase of a crisis but lacks the resources to assist people displaced for a longer period or to help returnees reintegrate, and it has no age-specific or gender-specific policies. The National Commission for Refugees (NCFR) has taken responsibility for post-emergency and long-term programmes for IDPs. However, the Nigerian Red Cross has often been first to provide aid, as it has the structure and the capacity necessary to respond at short notice.

There has been no consistent drive for durable solutions; in many cases there has been no support for the rebuilding of homes and livelihoods in areas of return, and where IDPs have sought to integrate locally or resettle in another part of the country, material support has been scarce. Apart from addressing the root causes of communal violence, comprehensive compensation and restitution mechanisms and reconstruction efforts in areas of return are needed. These would depend on clearer mandates, greater institutional support to IDP focal points, better and more efficient funding, and greater staff capacity.

The UN in Nigeria has focused on development rather than humanitarian issues, where it feels there is more to be gained in tackling the recurrent conflicts. Coordination between humanitarian agencies at all levels has been inconsistent.