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This is an excerpt from IDMC's 2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

## SPOTLIGHT

# NIGERIA

## Floods and conflict converged to deepen an existing crisis

More than 541,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence were recorded in Nigeria in 2018, bringing the number of people living in displacement as of the end of the year to 2.2 million. Ongoing conflict in north-eastern states and new conflict between herders and farmers over scarce resources in the Middle Belt led to 341,000 and 200,000 new displacements, respectively. Thirty-four of Nigeria's thirty-six states were also affected by flooding as the banks of the Benue and Niger rivers burst, triggering 600,000 new displacements and submerging thousands of homes.<sup>58</sup>

Despite official insistence that Boko Haram is close to defeat, attacks by armed opposition groups continued last year, particularly in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.<sup>59</sup> About 90 per cent of IDPs, or just over two million, were living in the north-east of the country as of the end of 2018. An estimated 832,000 people also continue to live in areas under the control of armed groups in the north-east and remain inaccessible to aid workers.<sup>60</sup> Humanitarian access has been severely restricted throughout the ten years of conflict, despite organisations' efforts to negotiate entry points.

Over 311,000 movements were reported as returns by data providers in 2018; however, these are not considered sustainable as IDPs are returning to damaged or destroyed housing, or are still living in areas plagued by security risks. The Nigerian government is investing in reconstruction initiatives to promote IDPs' return.<sup>61</sup> In the Bama area of Borno state, it built or renovated around 10,000 homes, more than 150 classrooms and more than 50 hand water pumps. It approved the return of 120,000 IDPs in March 2018, but armed groups are still active in the area.<sup>62</sup> Concerns about the volatile security situation led the UN and the Borno state governor to sign a returns policy framework, which states that basic services and security must be restored



- Attacks by Boko Haram in 2018 (Source: ACLED)
- States most affected by floods and conflict
- Areas affected by floods in 2018 (Source: GDACS)
- Middle Belt states where internal displacement was reported in 2018

before IDPs go back to their areas of origin. As such, it is an important step toward ensuring safe, sustainable and dignified returns.<sup>63</sup>

In the Middle Belt, tensions that had been brewing for four years between pastoralists from the north of the region and farmers from the south erupted into armed conflict in 2018, leading to significant violence and destruction. Desertification associated with climate change was a factor, degrading already overstretched pasture and forcing herders to move south in search of grazing land. The conflict in the north-east has also driven herders south. These factors combined with others in 2018 to inflame tensions. New anti-grazing laws in Benue state enraged herders, who were pushed into neighbouring states where they clashed with farmers, and a culture of impunity for past crimes, including killings and the destruction of villages, has aggravated the situation further by encouraging people to take the law into their own hands. Only five people have been tried and sentenced for killings in the region since 2017. The under-reporting of the crisis and the lack of humanitarian presence in the area mean that reported displacement figures are likely to be underestimates.<sup>64</sup>

The majority of the new displacements associated with the Middle Belt conflict were recorded in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states. Local emergency management agencies have been responding to the crisis. For example, the Plateau State Emergency Management Agency has been providing food and water to IDPs in camps in the state, but shortages are still reported.<sup>65</sup> Camp residents complain of overcrowding and lack of water. More than 60 per cent of those displaced in the



*Congestion of the Teachers Village camp in Maiduguri, Borno State resulted in lack of shelter and more than 10,000 internally displaced persons had to be moved to a new site. Photo: IOM/Jorge Galindo, March 2019*

region are children, who are out of school.<sup>66</sup> There has been a significant international response to the displacement situation in the north-east, but no significant international presence is engaged with the unfolding Middle Belt crisis.<sup>67</sup>

Nigeria is also highly prone to flooding, which was particularly widespread in 2018. Eighty per cent of the country was inundated at some point during the year, and the government declared a state of emergency in the worst-affected states of Anambra, Delta, Kogi and Niger.<sup>68</sup> Hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land were flooded, harming the livelihoods of farmers who lost crops.<sup>69</sup> In urban areas, poor planning and zoning means many residential areas have been built on exposed river banks and flood plains. This combined with poor drainage systems makes homes highly vulnerable to regular flooding.<sup>70</sup> The Nigerian Red Cross has been at the forefront of the response to those displaced by the flooding.<sup>71</sup>

Nigeria has Sub-Saharan Africa's largest population and economy, but conflict, disasters and development projects cause significant displacement each year.<sup>72</sup> The government was presented with a draft national policy on internal displacement aligned with the Guiding Principles and the Kampala Convention in 2011. Eight years later, however, it is still to be adopted.<sup>73</sup> Designing and implementing policies to reduce people's vulnerability and exposure to displacement and address the needs of those already displaced must be a priority for the government.

## | Notes

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