# **Inputs from the Northwest part of Nigeria**

# **Situation Overview** In northwest Nigeria, unidentified armed men have attacked civilians, engaging in criminal activities including village raids, sexual violence, kidnapping for ransom, killing, and large-scale cattle rustling. The criminal groups have jeopardized the livelihoods of about 21 million people living in Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, and Zamfara.

# While more than 1,100 people were killed in 2018 in the six states, over 2,200 were killed in 2019, and more than 1,600 fatalities were recorded between January – June 2020. By September 2019, such attacks had internally displaced over 160,000 people and produced more than 41,000 refugees. Displacement numbers now stand at over 247,000 IDPs and some 60,000 refugees.

# Banditry groups in six states of Nigeria’s northwest have evolved in tactics and mode of operations for the past nine years, killing civilians at will, displacing the population, and disrupting the agricultural livelihoods of affected communities. Their activities began in the form of herder-allied armed banditry but have transformed to resemble those of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). A surge in banditry attacks began in Nigeria in 2011 as a reflection of violent competition for scarce resources, mainly between farmers and herders in the northwest. Land and water became precious commodities especially due to environmental and ecological changes in the area, including desertification. Conflict over resources. including livestock. In certain cases, this led to farmer/herder clashes and fighting between armed nomadic Fulani herders and armed sedentary Hausa/Non-Hausa farmers. The introduction of criminal enterprises on both sides soon turned some of them into banditry groups. Unresolved legal issues of land and grazing rights, limited security and administrative presence that failed to provide security in the area, and politicization of the problem have further intensified the crisis and led to the emergence of fringe groups who now attack communities.

# Sokoto State is among the States in Northwest Nigeria where the struggle for control of natural resources, including mines, water resources, and pasture pitting between herders and farmers metamorphosed into communal clashes, conflict, banditry, and criminality causing forced internal displacement of 56,600 individuals into different parts of the state and 80,900 registered as refugees in Niger republic, scattered in about 20 villages in Maradi region out of which 71 percent are biometrically registered.

# The security situation in the state continues to deteriorate, between July and ending December 2021, 41 incidents leading to 213 fatalities were reported in the state. To respond to the challenges, the State government signed into law, the security challenges (Containment) Order No 3, 2021 in September 2021. The measures in the order include restriction of movements, curfews, and a ban on the sale of some items in local markets, among others. Furthermore, the state government announced the shutdown of the telecommunications networks in 14 out of the 23 Local Government Areas LGAs (on 20th September 2021 and restored on 13th October 2021) in the state due to the increase of attacks which they attributed to ongoing military operations in neighboring Zamfara State.

# The security situation is particularly alarming in the 8 eastern LGAs of Sokoto State sharing a border with Zamfara State, which comprises Gada, Isa, Sabon Birni, Wurno, Rabah, Goronyo, Illela, and Gwadabawa Local Government Areas. In addition to the whirls of attacks that destroyed lives and property which characterize the situation of the most affected Local Government Areas, the bandits also attacked Sokoto Municipality on 29 August 2021; a development that heightened fears generally and constituted a threat to other parts of the state that currently enjoy relative peace. The deteriorating security situation is also attributed to the increased military operations in Zamfara State which made the NSAGs move into parts of Sokoto State.

**Vulnerability:** The vulnerability has increased in camps and host communities in Sokoto State, owing to a lack of livelihood programs and food distribution interventions that are agency-provided. As a result of this, IDPs and their host communities now depend mostly on negative coping mechanisms (Child labor, child begging/hawking, and transactional sex).

**Human Rights:** During monitoring mentioned various forms of human rights violations committed by the bandits which include killings, injuries, kidnapping for ransom, abduction, torture, looting, forced labor, and rape. There were testimonies by men who were beaten, threatened with guns when they resisted attempts by the bandits to abduct their wives and daughters.

**Trafficking:** Informal camps in Sokoto State have become an easy source for traffickers, a cross-section of women revealed in an interview in Ramin Kura IDP camp (Sokoto Municipality), where suspected traffickers come from communities including neighboring states to take adolescent IDP girls as domestic help with the promise of education and improved lives. A situation that was disclosed was found to be always leading to abuse and exploitation of the IDPs. In the period under review, six adolescent girls were taken, it was reported that two returned to the camp while parents/caregivers of the other four were reported to have lost contact with them.

**Threat of Gender-Based** Violence Sokoto Municipality (Ramin Kura IDPs Camp) has 250 households, 98 percent of households were females headed households which, is due to the disappearance and detention of men throughout the insurgency, killings by non-state armed groups, as well as wives abandoned by their husbands. Female headed-households were described as vulnerable and dealing with exploitation. With limited livelihood opportunities and humanitarian assistance, women are engaging in survival sex and a high number are sending their children to hawk or beg and support their family.