

**Submission from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian  
Refugee Council (NRC) to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism established by the  
Human Rights Council in Resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007**

**17th session of the UPR Working Group (21 October - 1 November 2013)**

**Nigeria  
22 October 2013**

**Table of Contents**

I.	Executive summary .....	2
II.	Background to internal displacement in Nigeria.....	2
III.	Causes of internal displacement .....	2
a.	Displacement caused by inter-communal conflict.....	2
b.	Displacement caused in the name of political and criminal objectives.....	2
c.	Displacement caused by forced evictions.....	3
d.	Displacement induced by natural disasters .....	3
IV.	Normative and institutional framework for the protection of the rights of IDPs.....	3
V.	Main subjects of concern .....	4
a.	Obstacles to the right to be provided with adequate humanitarian assistance, protection and assistance towards finding lasting solutions.....	4
b.	Protection against arbitrary displacement .....	5
c.	Obstacles to the right to an adequate standard of living .....	5
VI.	Recommendations to the Government of Nigeria.....	5

Unless otherwise indicated, the information is drawn from the following annexed source: IDMC,  
Nigeria country profile, 8 June 2012.

## **I. Executive summary**

1. People internally displaced by conflict, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters in Nigeria have had the enjoyment of their human rights compromised on account of their displacement. National mechanisms to protect the human rights of internally displaced people<sup>1</sup> and to provide humanitarian assistance have been inadequate and inconsistent across regions. The government needs to address this large-scale phenomenon in order to protect the lives of IDPs in accordance with its international obligations.

## **II. Background to internal displacement in Nigeria**

2. Internal displacement in Nigeria is a recurring and large-scale phenomenon and has affected most of the country's 36 states. Africa's largest populated country has seen many waves of displacement, both small- and large-scale, caused by conflict, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters. The state has no population profiling or tracking mechanism to identify IDPs and the current numbers of internally displaced people as well as the full scope of displacement are unknown. Protection and assistance are partially inadequate because of these gaps. In 2011, estimates of people displaced by conflict and violence, reported in news reports and by different governmental sources, ranged roughly between 400,000 and one million. During 2012, according to media and civil society reports, close to 200,000 people were displaced by conflict, violence and human rights violations, while the government estimated that as many as two million people had been displaced by large-scale floods between July and October.

3. Many of Nigeria's IDPs are believed to have been displaced for years and continue not to enjoy a number of rights<sup>2</sup>, such as the right to an adequate standard of living. IDPs who return home soon after the event that made them flee their home are sometimes faced with the destruction of property, crops, infrastructure and, particularly in central and northern Nigeria, acute ethnic and religious tensions. These adverse conditions prolong their situation of hardship and render them unable to access durable solutions to their displacement and regain the full enjoyment of their rights.

## **III. Causes of internal displacement**

### **a. Displacement caused by inter-communal conflict**

4. Protracted inter-communal conflicts fuelled by religious, regional or ethnic divisions regularly lead to death and displacement throughout the country and particularly in the Middle-Belt region. Crises induced by religious divisions have produced the greater numbers of IDPs in Nigeria.

5. Tensions between communities have been aggravated by prejudicial government policies that relegate millions of Nigerians to second-class citizens by discriminating against "allogenes" or "settlers" who cannot trace their roots back to the original inhabitants of an area. In recent years, some of the bloodiest conflicts have pitted indigenes against "settlers". In general, as inter-group conflict is often related to competition over scarce resources, there tends to be a greater incidence of conflict in densely populated areas and where the land is valued for farming. Communal clashes between Fulani herders and local farmers over the use of land often lead to the displacement of thousands of people in central Nigeria.

### **b. Displacement caused in the name of political and criminal objectives**

---

<sup>1</sup> The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa defines "Internally Displaced Persons" as persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998; United Nations General Assembly (UN GA), Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, 9 February 2010

6. Since 2009, increasingly frequent and sophisticated attacks and bombings attributed to Islamist armed group Boko Haram and ensuing heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations have caused death, destruction of property and significant displacement<sup>3</sup>.

7. One of the latest largest waves of internal displacement took place in late December 2011, when a series of attacks by Boko Haram and subsequent clashes with the army caused the displacement of some 90,000 people. In January 2012, after Boko Haram issued a warning to Christians living in the Hausa-dominated north to leave or face retribution, Igbo leaders in the south-east called on Igbo families to head for safety in the south and offered a free shuttle bus service.

8. Since then, thousands of people have reportedly moved and families split up to send women and children to safer areas in the south-east, a situation reminiscent of the population movements from northern states provoked by religious clashes in 2000.

#### **c. Displacement caused by forced evictions**

9. More than two million urban Nigerians, particularly slum-dwellers and other marginalised people, have been forcibly evicted from their homes since 2000, most notably in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. These government-sanctioned evictions are usually carried out in the name of security and urban renewal programmes. In 2012, tens of thousands of people were forcefully evicted in Abonnema and Makoko slums in Rivers and Lagos states respectively. Further demolitions are planned in 2013, mostly on account of development programmes.

#### **d. Displacement induced by natural disasters**

10. In 2009 and 2010, Nigeria ranked 12th and 11th amongst countries with the highest reported levels of displacement by sudden-onset disasters worldwide, according to IDMC's global data. Floods reportedly displaced 140,000 people in 2009. The 2010 floods were notably triggered by the opening of floodgates on the Challawa and Tiga dams by the authorities, following heavy rains. Flooding and soil erosion in the states along the Niger River and its tributaries regularly cause internal displacement. About a million people living in the low-lying plains of the River Niger are considered at risk. According to the National Emergency Management Agency, floods and storms displaced up to two million people in 2010 and thousands of people in 2011, mainly in Jigawa, Sokoto and Kebbi States.

11. Between June and October 2012, over two million people were displaced by devastating floods throughout the country and after the release of overspill water from several dams in Cameroon and Nigeria.

### **IV. Normative and institutional framework for the protection of the rights of IDPs**

12. In its first report to the Universal Periodic Review, Nigeria declared being engaged in the promotion and protection of the human rights of IDPs and was in the process of ratifying the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). In 2011, Nigeria completed internal procedures for the ratification of the Kampala Convention and deposited instruments of ratification in May 2012. Over the past few years and, in particular, in 2011 and 2012, Nigeria took steps to address the protection of IDPs' rights and response mechanisms. For example, key governmental stakeholders participated in a workshop to review and discuss internal displacement in Nigeria and the provisions of the Kampala Convention. By July 2012, Nigeria had revised a draft national IDP policy to take into account the provisions of the Kampala Convention. As of February 2013, the national IDP policy had not been adopted by the Federal Executive Council and the protection of IDPs' rights on the ground had not seen major improvements.

13. Among national actors, local governments have *de facto* responsibility for ensuring an adequate response to IDPs' needs, with State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) – which have varying capacities - expected to step in when local authorities are unable to cope. Assistance from the federal government, through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), is only requested, and is subject to presidential approval, when the required response is beyond the capacity

---

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: Authorities must protect population against deadly attacks, 24 January 2012

of both local and state authorities. NEMA is mandated to coordinate disaster management throughout the country and to respond to the immediate needs of displaced populations as necessary. It operates offices in the six geopolitical zones of the country, for implementation of policy, coordination and communication purposes. IDP camps, described as a last and temporary resort, are usually run by NEMA or SEMAs and the Nigerian Red Cross, in conjunction with relevant agencies.

14. The National Commission for Refugees (NCFR) has been engaged in protecting and assisting IDPs since 2002, but its mandate and the scope of its activities are not clearly set out and it has a very limited field presence. Consequently, the division of responsibilities between NEMA and NCFR in emergency response and durable solutions is unclear. If necessary, the NCFR assists NEMA with camp management, and has a dedicated unit working on internal displacement. It has developed a comprehensive action plan for resettlement, reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration, but still needs to apply it on the ground.

## **V. Main subjects of concern**

### **a. Obstacles to the right to be provided with adequate humanitarian assistance, protection and assistance towards finding lasting solutions<sup>4</sup>**

15. While Nigeria has taken positive steps to address internal displacement, the actual response on the ground, generally undertaken through its disaster management mechanisms, has varied from state to state and has been uncoordinated and ad-hoc, leading to both shortfalls and duplication.

16. The lack of a country-wide profiling or tracking mechanism and the many and frequent events causing displacements throughout the country mean that sufficient and up-to-date information on the situation of IDPs' needs and location is lacking. Some areas or events tend to be more documented than others depending on the presence of national agencies, civil society organisations or the media. Several reports on the situation of IDPs throughout the country indicate that their human rights are fragile, not well protected and often violated by various actors, but comprehensive and reliable information is not available on the situation of people internally displaced by conflict, violence, natural disasters and forced evictions across the country.

17. When support is provided, the tendency has been to focus on the provision of assistance and to neglect protection needs. Weaknesses exist in the operations of NEMA and NCFR, the two main government bodies responsible for the response to internal displacement. Moreover, national response is often limited to short-term humanitarian assistance, leaving IDPs with the sole responsibility of finding long-term solutions to their displacement.

18. Overall, the response tends to target people in camps, even though the majority of IDPs are hosted by relatives or local communities, who bear most of the burden of assisting them. Where assistance has been provided in camps, there were several reports of premature closure, forcing IDPs to return home even though they did not have the means to do so, did not wish to, or were not ready. During the 2012 floods, many people in camps complained that the assistance they were provided with could hardly sustain them and their families, having lost all their belongings at home. Some IDPs also complained that food aid was being hoarded by local officials<sup>5</sup>. Some of the people displaced by the post-election violence were reportedly still living in camps in Kaduna state but left without any assistance and availability of social services, including schools<sup>6</sup>.

19. In April 2012, NEMA's regional coordinator for central and northern Nigeria publicly stated that IDP camps were usually closed after about one month, a short period of time for IDPs to be able to recover and resume their normal lives<sup>7</sup>. He added that the maintenance of IDP camps was costly for state governments, being one of the reasons for their early closure. For instance, there was no IDP camp in Plateau state in April 2012, despite this state being frequently subject to unrest and violence, causing large population movements.

---

<sup>4</sup> UN OCHA, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998 (GP), Principle 3; Kampala Convention, Article 9(2)b, c, Article 11

<sup>5</sup> Leadership, Nigeria: Flood - Epidemic Looms As Hunger, Death Ravage Victims, 21 October 2012

<sup>6</sup> Al Jazeera, Desperate conditions for displaced Nigerians, 16 November 2012

<sup>7</sup> Leadership, NEMA to close down IDP camps – Zonal coordinator, 15 April 2012

## **b. Protection against arbitrary displacement<sup>8</sup>**

20. Since 2009, increasingly frequent and sophisticated attacks and bombings attributed to Boko Haram and ensuing heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations have caused death, destruction of property and significant displacement. Counter-terrorist operations often result in human rights violations committed by Nigerian armed forces.

21. Arbitrary displacement by the military also takes place in the case of inter-communal clashes. In July 2012, the military conducted an operation in Plateau state following clashes between Christians and Muslims the same month. Thousands of people were evacuated from their homes in five villages and forced into makeshift camps without being given adequate information on the length and conditions of their displacement<sup>9</sup>. Assistance and protection was minimal and people reported lacking food and shelter. Although most people were able to return home by the end of the month, evacuations were carried out unnecessarily and expeditiously.

## **c. Obstacles to the right to an adequate standard of living<sup>10</sup>**

22. For several years, and more recently in 2011 and 2012, urban renewal and crime reduction programmes by several state governments translated into forced evictions that have taken place without adequate consultation, notice, compensation or offers of alternative accommodation. In some cases, state authorities disregarded judicial interim orders to refrain from evicting people and demolishing houses and infrastructure<sup>11</sup>. They have led to intra-urban displacement and left tens of thousands of people internally displaced in 2012 alone. Over the course of last year's summer, although these figures are hard to verify, it was estimated that 25,000 people had been evicted from Abonnema Wharf, in Port Harcourt, as well as 30,000 people from Makoko, in Lagos.

23. In addition to breaching victims' right to adequate housing, forced evictions, amounting to arbitrary displacement, often led to violations of other human rights, such as the rights to health care, education and livelihood because of the destruction of infrastructure and subsequent lack of access to social services. According to Amnesty International, women and girls are at particular risk of human rights violations following forced evictions<sup>12</sup>. In Abonnema Wharf, women are the breadwinners for their families and often hold small businesses within the community. They lose their sources of income as soon as their homes and businesses are demolished.

## **VI. Recommendations to the Government of Nigeria**

- Adopt a law to domesticate the Kampala Convention and a comprehensive national law and policy on internal displacement that clarifies strategies and mandates and includes the designation of a national IDP focal point for coordinating the protection and assistance needs of IDPs throughout the country, at all stages of displacement and without discrimination.
- Develop a data collection mechanism as a cornerstone for ensuring the protection of IDPs' rights. Collect and make available to national and international partners detailed and reliable information, disaggregated by age, sex and location, on various aspects of the situation of people internally displaced by conflict, violence, natural disasters and forced evictions across the country.
- Provide protection and assistance to all IDPs irrespective of whether they live in camps or with host communities. In the latter case, assess the needs of host communities alongside IDPs in developing assistance plans.

---

<sup>8</sup>UDHR, Article 13 ; ICCPR, Article 12 ; GP, Principles 6 and 7; Kampala Convention, Article 3(1)a

<sup>9</sup>Agence France Presse, Nigeria army lets displaced return home after deadly unrest, 24 July 2012

<sup>10</sup>UDHR Article 25(1); ICESCR Article 11(1) as well as its impact on Articles 12, 13, and 6; GP, Principle 18; KC, Article 10; Constitution of Nigeria, Article 16(2)d

<sup>11</sup>Amnesty International, Nigeria: Forced eviction of Abonnema Wharf Waterfront: "Pack and Go!", July 2012

<sup>12</sup>Amnesty International, Nigeria: Forced eviction of Abonnema Wharf Waterfront: "Pack and Go!", July 2012

- Respect freedom of choice of residence and take all necessary steps to protect people against arbitrary displacement. As concerns displacement induced by projects carry out socio-economic and environmental assessments, explore feasible alternatives, inform and consult persons likely to be displaced, and respect international law and standards when carrying out evictions, notably by giving sufficient notice and adequate compensation to those affected.
- Adopt measures to ensure that returns are voluntary and ensure that mechanisms are in place to support other forms of settlement, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

## **About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre**

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).