

# **Advocacy Note**

# Participation of Internally Displaced Persons in Electoral Processes in North-East Nigeria

**March 2023** 

#### **Summary:**

In the lead-up to the national and state-level elections in Nigeria, the Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) collected quantitative and qualitative data on the ability of different community members, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities, to participate in the elections. Protection data clearly shows that IDPs are disproportionately excluded from exercising their right to vote, including due to challenges associated with securing needed documentation, which is exacerbated by their displacement. Women IDPs are particularly affected. Ultimately, IDPs surveyed had higher levels of interest in voting compared to host communities and their ability to participate in elections is both a basic right as well as a critical dimension of realizing longer term durable solutions to displacement.

#### **Key findings include:**

- One quarter (26%) of the monitored heads of households across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States (BAY states) are not eligible to vote due to the lack of Permanent Voter Cards (PVC).
- IDPs are the population group among the respondents most affected by the lack of PVCs (27%) while 23% of host community members and 18% of IDP returnees also lack a PVC, excluding them from exercising their right to vote.
- Findings clearly show the gendered dimensions of these barriers, with women disproportionately lacking a PVC (31%), compared to men (16%). For IDP women, the risk of exclusion is even slightly higher (33%) than for non-displaced women (29%). IDP women are also twice as likely to be without a PVC compared to IDP men (17%).
- For host community heads of households who are eligible to vote but are not in possession of a PVC, the barriers are primarily administrative in nature (total combined 87%). For IDP heads of households, their displacement status has negatively impacted their ability to access the PVC and IDPs, including those affected by enforced relocations in Borno state, who do hold a PVC face additional logistical and financial challenges in accessing voting sites, despite the special measures to facilitate IDP voting by the Borno State Government (BSG). Similarly, those coming out of inaccessible areas and having gone through the DDRR transition centres reported not having been physically available for registration and not having been made aware of the process.
- 19% of host community respondents indicated they do not have an interest in the elections and believe their vote does not count, while only a minority of IDP respondents indicated this (6%), evidencing high interest among the IDP respondents to actively participate in civil matters.
- The overwhelming majority, 94%, of heads of households registered to vote, want to exercise their right to do so. IDP women had the highest intentions among all assessed women (93%) to exercise their right to vote, highlighting the need to further address barriers and ensure specific supports that will enable them to exercise their right to vote on an equal basis to non-displaced populations.

#### 1. Background

On 25 February 2023, Nigeria held presidential and federal parliamentary elections, followed by gubernatorial and state legislative elections to be held on 11 March 2023. More than 90 million Nigerians, in a population estimated at over 210 million, are eligible to vote in 2023. The Government of Nigeria is constitutionally responsible to create the enabling environment for free, fair, credible, and inclusive elections, while the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the Election Management Body (EMB) is mandated to conduct them. The 2022 Electoral Act and the 2022 Revised Regulations and Framework for Voting by IDPs guide the conduct of IDP voting in Nigeria and afford IDP communities the opportunity to vote in recognition and protection of their rights as Nigerian citizens as enshrined in the 2021 National Policy for IDPs and in compliance with international and regional instruments and conventions.

There are 2.1 million IDPs in the conflict-affected BAY states across North-East Nigeria among whom around 725,000 IDPs are eligible to vote, including around 402,000 IDP women and 322,000 IDP men. The revised framework for voting by IDPs includes stipulations for INEC's pre-operational planning for IDP voting (e.g. continuous voter registration at IDP camps; making PVCs available for collection; continuous mapping, tracking and reporting on IDP populations), voting (e.g. special security arrangements for IDP voting), engagement with stakeholders, persons with disabilities, and others (e.g. at national, state, LGA, and IDP camp level), voter education and publicity for IDP voting (e.g. direct communication with IDPs; sensitization; collaboration with IDP leadership, community and religious leaders in voter educational activities), budget template for IDP voting (e.g. designated movement corridors for IDP voters), and monitoring and evaluation. Realizing voting rights of IDPs is key for their successful long-term integration, as voting ensures both that IDPs have a voice in their community and actively participate in civil matters and that elected officials are accountable to all population groups residing in their constituencies.

#### 1.1. International Standards and Human Rights Law Provisions related to IDP voting rights

The rights of IDPs to exercise their civil and political rights of franchise are enshrined in international standards and human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

- Art. 21, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives".
- Principle 22 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement affirms the right of IDPs to political
  participation regardless of their location in the country whether their area of origin, place of displacement,
  or elsewhere in the country.
- Principle 29 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement reaffirms the right of IDPs to participate fully and equally in public affairs at all levels.
- Art. 25, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, "every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any distinctions and unreasonable restrictions to vote".
- Art. 5, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, "states should
  guarantee the right of everyone to participate in elections-to vote and to stand for election on the basis of
  universal and equal suffrage".

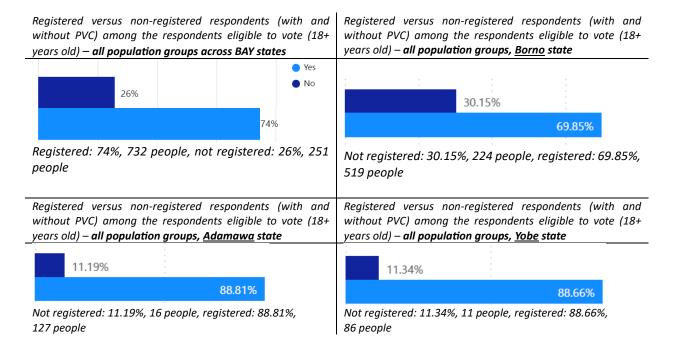
#### 2. Methodology of Data Collection

The PSNE collected election-relevant protection monitoring data at household level across 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the BAY states (Borno – 11 LGAs: Askira/Uba, Bama, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Jere, Konduga, Magumeri, Maiduguri, Monguno, Ngala; Adamawa – 6 LGAs: Girei, Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Yola South; Yobe –4 LGAs: Bade, Damaturu, Gujba, Potiskum) in December 2022 and January 2023. A total of 983 heads of households were interviewed, among them 63% females (616 respondents) and 37% males (376 respondents). Out of the 983 heads of households, 64% were IDPs (625 respondents), 30% were members of the Host Community (296 respondents), and 6% were IDP Returnees (62 respondents). In addition to this, the PSNE conducted 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 100 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) between January and March 2023 both with IDPs in camps and host communities, including those who have experienced multiple displacement. A total of 37% of FGD participants were men and 63% were women, 17% of the Key Informants were men and 83% were women.

#### 3. Key Findings

## 3.1 Exclusion of the Population from Enjoying their Civil and Political Right to Vote

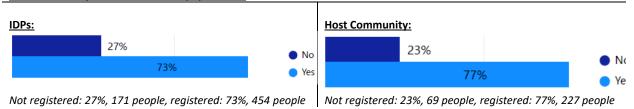
From the 983 households assessed with heads of households eligible to vote (18+ years), 26% of them indicated not to be in the possession of a PVC and therefore not registered to vote, while 74% were. Proportionally, the majority of the assessed heads of households without a PVC reside in Borno state (30%), followed by Yobe state (11%) and Adamawa state (11%). Therefore, the assessed population in Borno state is significantly less able to exercise their civil and political right to vote compared to the assessed population in Yobe and Adamawa states.



#### 3.2 IDPs' Inability to Equally Exercise their Civil and Political Right to Vote

From the 26% of assessed heads of households without a PVC, proportionally, a combined total of 27% from among the assessed IDP population respondents across the BAY states are not in possession of PVCs, while 23% of the assessed Host Community respondents indicated not to be in possession of a PVC and 18% of the assessed IDP Returnee population. This evidences that IDPs are the population group among the respondents most affected by the lack of PVCs, thereby most excluded from exercising their civil and political right to vote. However, host community members are also being significantly disenfranchised as well as IDP Returnee members still to a considerable extent. For Borno state, while having the biggest population of disenfranchised voters from the assessed households across the BAY states (30%), the different population groups of IDPs (31%), host community members (29%) and IDP returnees (29%) are equally disenfranchised. In comparison, in Adamawa state, with only 11% among the assessed heads of household not registered to vote, IDPs (12%) and host community members (12%) are equally disenfranchised, while IDP returnees are less disenfranchised (5%). In Yobe state, 15% of the assessed IDP heads of households are not registered to vote, while all interviewed heads of household from among the host community and IDP returnees hold a PVC.

Registered versus non-registered voters (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old – for <u>IDP</u>, <u>Host Community</u>, and <u>IDP Returnee populations</u> across the BAY states





#### 3.3 Gendered Dimensions to Exercise the Civil and Political Right to Vote

Overall, women are proportionally more affected by exclusion from enjoying their right to vote than men with a combined 31% of women without a PVC versus 16% of men among the assessed heads of households eligible to vote. Significantly, across the different population groups, IDP women are the most disenfranchised among the assessed heads of households (33%), almost twice as much as IDP men (17%) who are not registered as voters. Though to a slightly lower extent, host community women are more than twice as much disenfranchised from voting (29%) than host community men (14%). Similarly, IDP Returnee women – though to a further reduced extent (23%) – are also almost twice as disenfranchised from their right to vote than IDP Returnee men (13%).

Proportionally from among the female respondents, women residing in Borno state have been most affected by the lack of a PVC across all population groups (37% IDP women, 35% host community women, 33% IDP Returnee women) as compared to women respondents in Adamawa (14% IDP women, 15% host community women, 0% IDP Returnee women) and Yobe states (13% IDP women, 0% host community women, 0% IDP Returnee women), with women IDPs in Borno (37%) therefore being most disenfranchised among IDP women across the BAY states.

Registered versus non-registered respondents (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old) - all population groups and gender Male: Female: 16% 31% No No 84% Yes Yes Not registered: 31%, 194 people, registered: 69%, 422 people | Not registered: 16%, 57 people, registered: 84%, 310 people Registered versus non-registered respondents (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old) according to population group and gender Male IDP population Female IDP population 17% 33% No No Yes 83% 67% Not registered: 33%, 134 people, registered: 67%, 269 people Not registered: 17%, 37 people, registered: 83%, 185 people Female Host Community population Male Host Community population 29% 14% No No Yes Yes 71% 86% Not registered: 14%, 16 people, registered: 86%, 98 people Not registered: 33%, 53 people, registered: 71%, 129 people Female IDP Returnee population Male IDP Returnee population 23% 13% No No Not registered: 23%, 7 people, registered: 77%, 24 people Not registered: 13%, 4 people, registered: 87%, 27 people

#### 3.4 Barriers to Accessing PVCs

The reasons why respondents eligible to vote are not in possession of a PVC that would qualify them to cast their ballot are in their majority of bureaucratic and administrative nature (combined total of 87%), including a lack of awareness of the administration process (18%), the loss of the PVC after registration and inability to re-issue documents (16%), the perceived tediousness of the registration process (15%), the lack of responsiveness from the registration office after registration (14%), the lack of awareness on where to register (13%) or the lack of registration points close to their locations (9%). A minority (1.17%) of assessed heads of households reported not to be registered due to a lack of money. Since the administrative process of being issued a PVC is free of charge, it is unclear whether this points to extortion or if the respondents may not have been able to cover travel costs to reach the registration office.



Other

2.39%

Reasons why respondents eliqible to vote are not registered as voters/holders of PVCs – all population groups

IDP head of household respondents eligible to vote but not registered as voters indicated most often that this was because they had registered but lost their PVCs after registration and were unable to get them reissued (19%). While the background was not further elaborated during the quantitative household assessments, the mobility of the displaced population or their higher exposure to incidents such as fire outbreaks or floods etc. may put them at greater risk of losing items, overall suggesting a correlation between displacement and heightened risk of disenfranchisement, making it less feasible for IDPs to enjoy their civil and political rights without their displacement status having an impact on this. A lack of awareness of the registration process (18%) as well as a lack of responsiveness from the registration office after registration (17%) makes up the second and third most important factors for eligible IDPs not to be registered as voters. Especially the latter factor of the inability to engage with the registration office after the registration suggests again that the IDPs' mobility may have been a contributing factor for their inability to get registered.<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.5 Attitudes and Perceptions regarding Participation in Elections

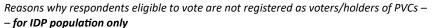
Importantly, only a small group of IDP heads of household (6%) indicated that they were not registered as voters because they were not interested in the elections and did not believe that their vote counted. This evidences a high interest among the IDP respondents to be part of their receiving communities, have their voice heard and actively participate in civil matters. While issues on general awareness and bureaucratic and administrative impediments also hold for the assessed members of the host community and IDP Returnee households, there is a stark contrast regarding interest in the elections, as many of the host community and IDP Returnee heads of households are not interested in the elections and believe that their vote would not count (19% and 18% respectively). In contrast to the findings from the IDP respondents, assessed host community heads of households indicated to a lesser extent the loss of their PVCs (13%) or a lack of responsiveness from the registration office after registration (10%) as factors not to be registered as voters. Similarly, to the host community, IDP Returnees have also

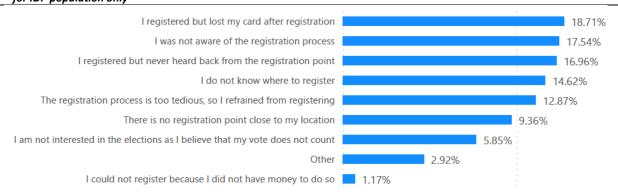
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See complementary qualitative data and analysis below.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See further information from the qualitative FGDs and KIIs in the below section on risk of exclusion of IDP voters who were forcibly relocated by the Borno State Government (BSG) as part of the camp closures in Maiduguri and risk of exclusion of IDPs coming out of inaccessible areas and having gone through the DDRR transition centers and military detention.

additionally indicated a lack of awareness of the registration process and its tediousness as the main factors not to be registered as voters despite being eligible to vote.

During FGDs and KIIs, participants also highlighted that the volatile security situation made them refrain from engaging in the administrative process to get their PVCs, fearing that it might be dangerous and expose them to protection risks.





Reasons why respondents eligible to vote are not registered as voters/holders of PVCs – for Host Community population only

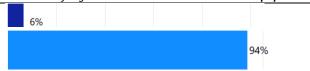


Reasons why respondents eligible to vote are not registered as voters/holders of PVCs – for IDP Returnee population only



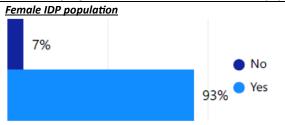
## 3.6 Voting Intentions and Motivation of Registered Voters

Out of the 74% of respondents who are eligible to vote and in possession of a PVC (732 respondents) overwhelming majority of 94% (686 respondents) of them intend to cast their ballot while 6% (46 respondents) plan not to do so. Female respondents – who are almost twice as likely to be disenfranchised from voting than male respondents – have almost the same intention to cast their ballot as male respondents, ranging between 83%-93% while voting intentions are slightly higher for men between 89%-98%. IDP women shared the highest intentions among all assessed women (93%) to make use of their right to vote. As per locations across the BAY states, 100% of assessed IDP, Host Community, and IDP Returnee women in Yobe state expressed their intention to cast their vote, as did also IDP Returnee women in Adamawa state.

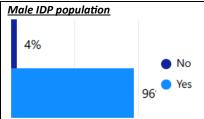


Yes
Not intending to vote: 6%, 46 people, intending to vote: 94%, 686 people

Intentions of registered voters to cast their vote - IDP population



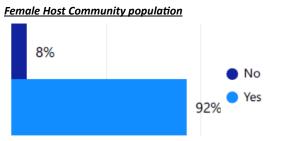
Not intending to vote: 7%, 20 people, intending to vote: 93%, 249 people



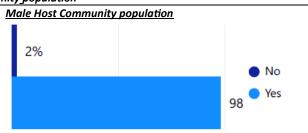
No

Not intending to vote: 4%, 7 people, intending to vote: 96%, 178 people

Intentions of registered voters to cast their vote – **Host Community population** 

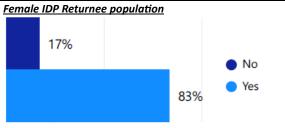


Not intending to vote: 8%, 10 people, intending to vote: 92%, 119 people

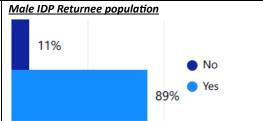


Not intending to vote: 2%, 2 people, intending to vote: 98%, 96 people

Intentions of registered voters to cast their vote – **IDP Returnee population** 



Not intending to vote: 17%, 4 people, intending to vote: 83%, 20 people



Not intending to vote: 11%, 3 people, intending to vote: 89%, 24 people

# Risk of exclusion of IDP voters who were forcibly relocated by the BSG as part of the camp closures in Maiduguri:

The BSG officially closed all IDP camps in the Greater Maiduguri Area and physically relocated IDPs from 9 camps since May 2021, affecting at least 160,000 IDPs. A group of IDPs currently residing in the GSSSS camp in Bama was forcibly relocated by the BSG from Dalori 1 camp in Maiduguri in August 2022. The interviewed IDPs shared that the polling station was indicated as Maiduguri on the PVCs of IDPs among them who were in possession of PVCs, since they had resided there before the government-led relocation. They reported that the BSG/INEC had not shared any information with them on how to cast their vote prior to their relocation to Bama and that they had not received any further guidance or support from the BSG/INEC in Bama ahead of the elections. While the BSG has facilitated the voting of IDPs eligible to vote in Bama inside Bama's GSSSS IDP camp and also provided transportation between Bama and Banki for IDPs originally from Banki to vote there, the IDPs from Dalori 1 camp did not receive transportation support from the BSG/INEC to vote in Maiduguri at the 25 February Elections and

at the same time could not cast their ballot in Bama. Only some of the IDPs from this group who had the financial means to travel to Maiduguri did so, while some other IDP movements to the polling station in Maiduguri got sponsored by local politicians. The IDPs shared that they generally considered the journey unsafe, requesting for the BSG/INEC to ensure security on the road to exercise their right to vote or being allowed to vote in Bama. The interviewed IDPs also shared that INEC had generally supported those IDPs whose PVCs were not ready by the time of relocation from Dalori 1 camp in Maiduguri and delivered the PVCs to them at the GSSSS camp in Bama, however, a few of those IDPs did not get their PVCs.

Risk of exclusion of IDPs coming out of inaccessible areas and having gone through the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) transition centres and military detention:

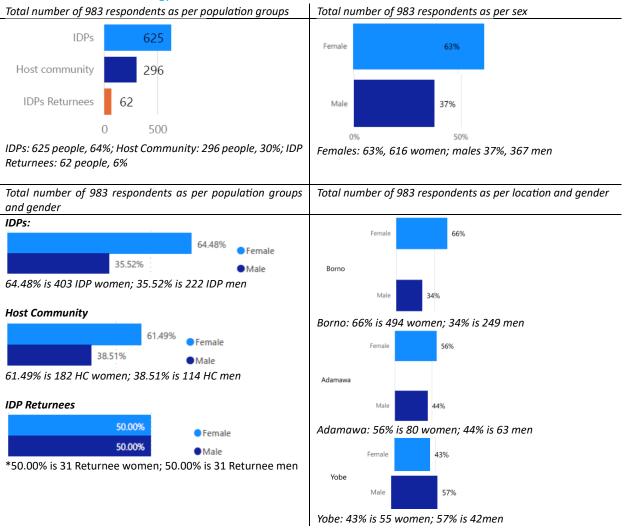
The BSG is leading the DDRR of former fighters of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), a process that is key to the restoration of peace and stability in North-East Nigeria. While mass exits have been recorded in 2022, the majority of the people coming out of inaccessible areas are ex-fighters' family members and other civilian groups. A group of former captives in NSAG territory who have transitioned through Hajj camp and stayed locally in military detention for further investigation have been categorized as civilians and are now located in Gwoza LGA. They shared that they had been disenfranchised, as the ones who went to Hajj camp reported that they were not informed of the registration process when they were moved to Gwoza, while the IDPs who stayed in military detention for further investigation said that the voter registration exercise was ongoing while they were in detention and did not get access to it upon their release. The IDPs shared that they wanted to vote but do not see a possibility for them to do so in the absence of the BSG/INEC sharing information and providing support.

#### 4. Recommendations

- State authorities across the BAY states and INEC officials to address bureaucratic and administrative impediments for voter registration that deprive people of realizing their right to vote, in alignment with their responsibility to create a conducive enabling environment that supports and facilitates eligible voters' ability to access their PVCs.
- In particular, State authorities and INEC officials across the BAY states to take affirmative action to ensure that
  women are not excluded from realizing their right to vote. This can include efforts such as targeted and genderresponsive voter outreach and education and specific efforts aimed at facilitating women's equal access to
  election relevant civil documentation, including PVCs, in collaboration with women's rights organizations and
  gender justice leaders.
- In particular, **State authorities and INEC officials across the BAY states** to ensure that existing special measures under the IDP voting framework, i.e. adaptations of regular electoral procedures, are holistically applied especially through mobile registration units, dedicated polling stations in IDP camps, and the facilitation of transportation to voting locations to ensure that IDPs in general and IDP women, in particular, are not excluded from realizing their right to vote. These measures on pre-operational planning for IDP voting, voter education etc. need to reflect the particular experiences and barriers faced by IDPs in North-East Nigeria, including IDPs' difficulties to obtain new or replace lost PVCs, and need to be applied equally to all IDPs across all LGAs to facilitate the voting of the entire IDP population that is eligible to vote. Targeted and gender-responsive voter outreach and education in IDP camps, return areas and other areas with high numbers of IDPs/returnees can help enable female displaced populations' effective participation in the electoral process.
- State authorities in Borno state to refrain from forcibly relocating people and thereby effectively heightening their risk of exclusion from participation in elections, as any relocation complicates INEC efforts of continuous mapping, tracking, and reporting on IDP populations. When relocations take place, special measures under the IDP voting framework must be put in place for all relocated IDP populations to proactively ensure the relocated population in its entirety is not disenfranchised by, for instance, being unable to physically reach their polling stations as indicated on their PVCs.
- State authorities across the BAY states to recognize that IDPs want to be actively engaged in their receiving constituencies and exercise their civil and political rights to vote without this being impacted by their displacement history and that this contributes to durable solutions and inclusive development over the long term. Therefore, state authorities to prioritize durable solutions for displaced populations that are grounded in respect for the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

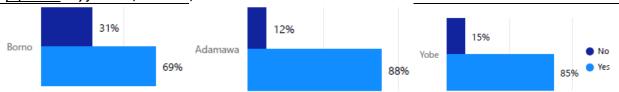
#### **Annexes**

#### Data on section 2: Methodology and Data Collection



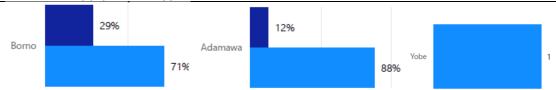
# Data on section 3.2: IDPs' Inability to Equally Exercise their Civil and Political Right to Vote

Registered versus non-registered voters (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old – for <u>IDP</u> <u>population</u> only for Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states



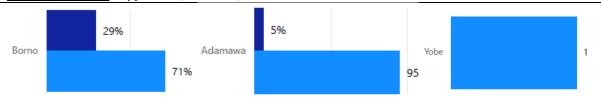
Borno: 31%, 154 people and 69%, 345 people; Adamawa: 12%, 6 people, 88%, 45 people; Yobe: 15%, 11 people, 85%, 64 people.

Registered versus non-registered voters (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old – for <u>Host Community</u> population only for Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states



Borno: 29%, 60 people and 71%, 150 people; Adamawa: 12%, 9 people, 88%, 64 people; Yobe: 100%, 13 people.

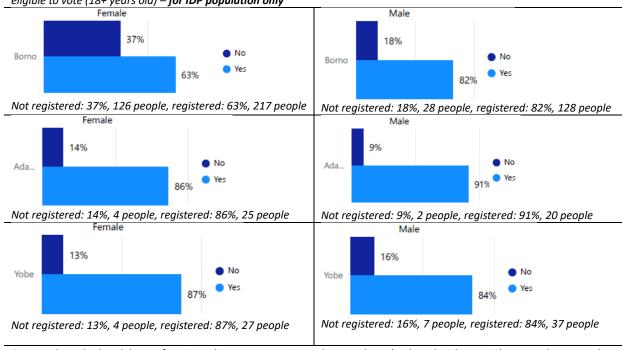
Registered versus non-registered voters (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old – for <u>IDP</u> Returnee population only for Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states



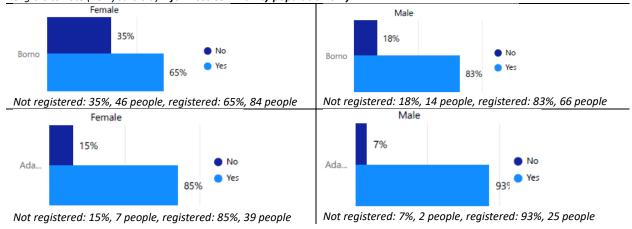
Borno: 29%, 10 people and 71%, 24 people; Adamawa: 5%, 1 person, 95%, 18 people; Yobe: 100%, 9 people.

#### Data on section 3.3: Gendered Dimensions to Exercise the Civil and Political Right to Vote

State and gender breakdown of registered versus non-registered respondents (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old) – **for IDP population only** 



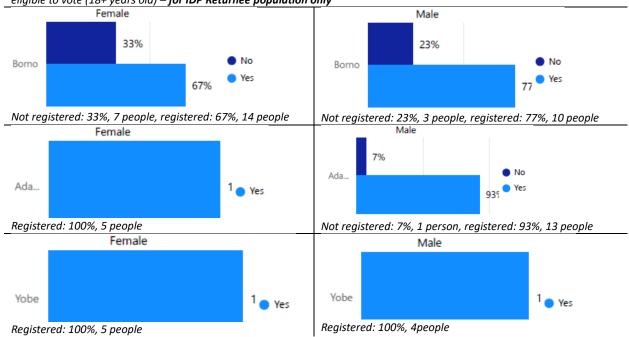
State and gender breakdown of registered versus non-registered respondents (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old) – **for Host Community population only** 



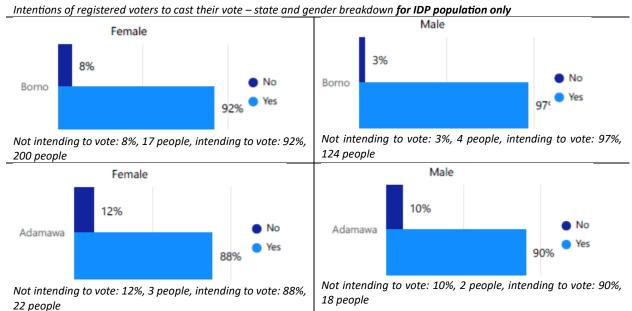


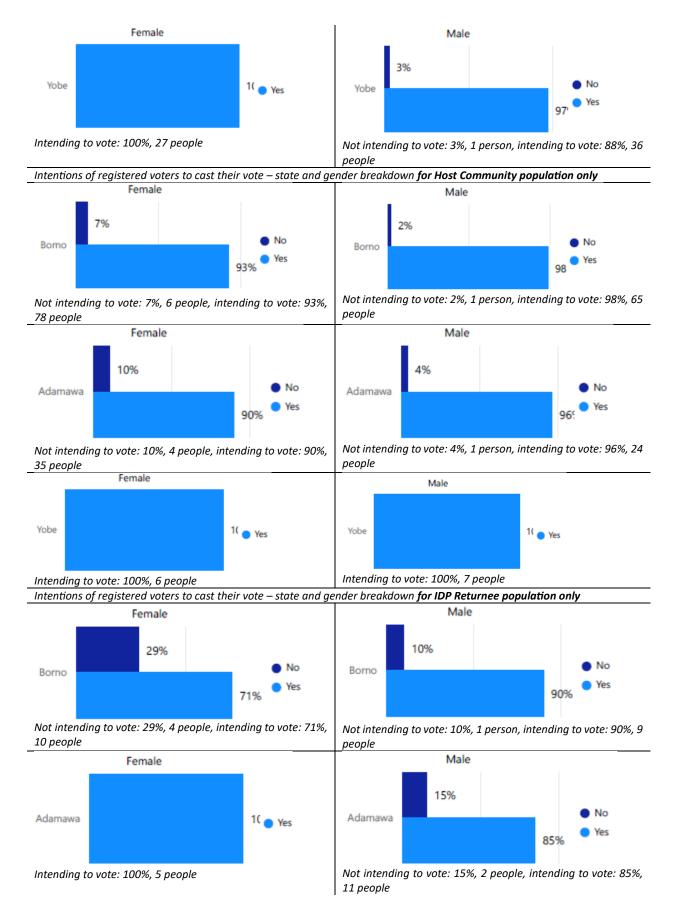


State and gender breakdown of registered versus non-registered respondents (with and without PVC) among the respondents eligible to vote (18+ years old) – for IDP Returnee population only

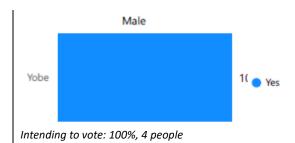


#### Data on section 3.6: Voting Intentions and Motivation of Registered Voters









Intending to vote: 100%, 5 people