



## **Advocacy Note on Protection Concerns related to the Closure of Camps in Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno State, North-East Nigeria**

**December 19, 2023**

### **1. Background**

Internal displacement across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States in Northeast Nigeria continues, reflecting years of conflict and ongoing insecurity. Borno State currently has 62 formal and 158 informal camps which host total of about 874,213 IDPs across the 17 LGAs. Adamawa State currently host 19,277 IDPs in 3 formal IDP camps and 22 informal IDP camps. In Yobe State, a total 19,451 IDPs are currently hosted in 19 informal IDP camps.

Amidst this ongoing crisis, the Borno State Government (BSG) continued its efforts to end displacement by closing camps and in so doing, closed all official Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Maiduguri in early 2023 and announced plans to continue closing camps in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) and the informal camps within Maiduguri and Jere. The BSG had closed all official IDP camps in Maiduguri in early 2023 and announced plans to continue closing camps in the LGAs. 17 return locations<sup>1</sup>, some of which are in areas designated as hard or extremely hard to reach for humanitarian partners due to insecurity, have been identified by the BSG as areas where the IDPs will be relocated to.

In an effort to begin the closure of camps within the LGAs the Governor of Borno State visited Monguno on 20-22 November 2023 and announced the closure of the Government Senior Science Secondary School (GSSS) camp. The GSSS Camp hosts 5,862 households consisting of 30,368 individuals from parts of Kukawa, Nganzai, Marte and Guzamala LGAs. Reportedly, the IDPs will be relocated to the 1,000-housing located along the Monguno-Maiduguri Road which is under construction by UNDP. IDPs who are from communities and villages that have attained relative security according to government assessment, will be returned to their areas of origin, particularly those from Kekeno, Mile 90 and Yoyo, towns in Monguno LGA. The Borno State Government has promised to provide a resettlement package to those that are willing to return to their ancestral lands. It remains unclear if those who do not return to their ancestral home will also benefit from the resettlement package.

This Advocacy Note, developed by the Protection Sector North-East Nigeria with inputs from key protection partners, serves to outline key facts and highlight protection concerns, as identified by a range of protection actors working with affected populations, in relation to the closures of camps in the LGAs. The Note also highlights protection concerns that are relevant to ensure sustainable solutions. It also provides recommendations for key stakeholders regarding the actions needed to ensure the rights of the affected population are upheld throughout the camp closures and relocation processes, in line with national, regional and international standards and in support of durable solutions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kuwawa LGA (kekono, Yoyo, Mile 90, Baga, Doron Baga, Cross-kawa)  
Monguno LGA (Borehole)  
Gwoza LGA (Kirawa, Ngoshe, Warabe)  
Mafa LGA (Ajiri, Ngarnam)  
Marte LGA (New Marte)  
Konduga LGA (Kawuri)  
Bama LGA (Nguro soye, Tarmuwa, Kumshe)

<sup>2</sup> This includes the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (2004), the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) ratified by Nigeria in 2012, the Borno State Government Return Strategy (2018), and the Nigerian National IDP Policy (2021).

## Key Messages

- As Nigerian citizens, IDPs in Borno state and elsewhere have the right to reside in any location of their choice within the country. Accordingly, the BSG should support IDPs in seeking their preferred solution to their internal displacement. Relocating IDPs to BSG preferred locations should not be the only option provided and supported by the BSG. Instead, support could also be explored for consideration to integrate within the location of displacement or in any other location within Nigeria – in compliance with national, regional, and international standards, and in line with the rights of IDPs for a sustainable solution to displacement. International actors should strategically negotiate their support to the BSG for multiple IDPs solutions and avenues, with these international obligations in mind.
- The closure of camps and relocation of the population to towns- areas with insecure nearby surroundings- and government designated sites has often exacerbated IDPs' exposure to protection risks, among them increased cases of attacks on civilians by NSAG, unsolved Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues, as well as injuries and fatalities due to mine contamination. A lack of safe access to farmland and livelihood opportunities amidst the ongoing reduction of food aid continues to create new protection risks while perpetuating humanitarian needs, as farmers are pushed further into lands that are unsafe, putting their safety at risk. Measures to mitigate these assorted protection risks will need to be ensured and advocated for, to make any return sustainable and meaningful.
- IDPs are currently being considered by the BSG as a means to exemplify the restoration of stability and to take over ownership of towns formerly controlled by Non-State Armed Group (NSAG) that are now again under the control of the Nigeria Military. Those locations are predominately occupied by the military and with limited or no civilian presence. However, instead of the presence of civilians generating greater security and stability, recent years have seen the movement of civilians into newly government-controlled areas have exposed relocated IDPs to attacks as they engage in livelihood outside of military controlled areas. The BSG should explore and prioritize the resettling/relocation of persons to safe communities where there are civilians and the minimum provision of basic services.
- Access to basic services for all is key. Most importantly, adequate plans to cater for children and other vulnerable groups remain vital. Children stand the risk of missing out on education in the relocated communities where there are no schools. Younger children risk malnutrition if humanitarian actors cannot reach them with nutritional services. The Older persons without caregivers that cannot care for themselves, female heads of households and persons with serious medical conditions may be at heightened risk if basic services to address their needs in the relocated communities are not provided or are insufficient. To this end, the BSG is called upon to make services available for all the vulnerable groups that will be affected by the camp closure- including those still in camps and those in the process of relocation. The BSG's support in facilitating a conducive working environment and unfettered access to affected populations by Humanitarian and development actors to assist where possible will be crucial.
- With the ongoing conflict in Borno state, the camps within the LGAs have hosted a majority of the population fleeing NSAG controlled areas and with the planned closure of all camps, the ability of the host communities to absorb these populations from the camp will need to be properly managed and guided. It is recommended that the camp closure take place in a phased manner that it allows for people to either relocate to safe areas or be integrated in the host communities without creating additional shocks in communities that are already facing the consequences of conflict and are vulnerable because of the overstretched resources among other reasons. There is a need for Government resources needed to support this "shock"

## 2. **Government of Nigeria's (GoN) Legal Obligation on Internal displacement**

The GoN ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa ("Kampala Convention") in 2012. In the convention, it is clearly outlined that IDPs have the right 'to be protected against forcible return to or resettlement in any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.' The government has an obligation to consult with and ensure the participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return, resettlement, or integration, enabling displaced people to 'make a free and informed choice' regarding these processes. The adoption of the Kampala convention in Nigeria happened in 2021, when Nigeria released the 'National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons' reiterating: '*national responsibility towards prevention and protection of citizens and, in some cases, non-citizens, from incidences of arbitrary and other forms of internal displacement, meet their assistance and protection needs during displacement, and ensure their rehabilitation, return, reintegration and relocation after displacement. The policy spells out principles guiding humanitarian assistance and implementation of durable solutions in situations of internal displacement in Nigeria and has adopted the human rights-based approach and its principles*'. At a state level, the Borno state 2018 Return Strategy, lays out minimum conditions for returns in compliance with international law. The minimum conditions, set out in the strategy, namely security, access, full participation, voluntariness, and the availability of basic social services, remain unmet across areas where relocation has been planned. The **Government of Nigeria (GoN) would need to uphold its signed commitments** to abide by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and frameworks, in particular, complying to act in line with the *Kampala Convention*, the *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (2010), *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (2004) and the *UN Durable Solutions Preliminary Operational Guide* (2016), as well as the GoN's newly endorsed *IDP Policy* heeding the aforementioned documents. The BSG has been working with developmental actors and the office of the UN Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement and it remains important that the BSG remains committed to the key guiding considerations for the

action agenda, which have been thought through in terms of a comprehensive all-round approach to sustainable and credible solutions for IDPs.

### **3. Experiences from Previous Camp Closures**

As of early 2023, authorities in Borno State had closed eight (8) official IDP camps in Maiduguri and facilitated the relocation of over 150, 000 IDPs from the closed IDP camps with many unable to return to their habitual place of residence due to insecurity and the lack of basic social services and livelihood opportunities among other reasons. If future closures follow similar patterns as efforts to date, there will undoubtedly be serious protection implications and impacts as outline below.

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- **Abrupt Closures:** previous camp closures by the Borno State Government have been done abruptly, with very limited notice, severely affected the ability for affected IDPs to consider different options and to make free and informed decisions and affecting the ability of receiving communities and humanitarians to undertake any needed preparations. A camp closure plan, share with the population and humanitarian actors working with the affected population remains vital.
- **Multiple Displacements:** There have been several instances since 2021, where persons relocated after camp closures to other locations were forced to flee to another location because of the insecurity in those locations. For instance, in the Soye community of Bama LGA, one of the return communities hosting IDPs from the closed Dalori 1 and Dalori 2 was attacked by the NSAG on the 27th of April 2023 where an adult IDP returnee was killed while fetching firewood behind the community. Due to trepidation some of the returned IDPs fled to Banki and Minawao in Cameroon in search of safety. Furthermore, 3% of the 16, 111 Households<sup>3</sup> assessed during protection monitoring in 2023 reported that they have experienced multiple displacements. It is worth noting that approximately 1 fifth of the 160,000 IDPs relocated from the closed camps in Maiduguri and Jere returned or stayed in MMC/Jere without any support for local integration.
- **Limited Sources of Livelihood:** IDPs relocated/returned to several locations including Kirawa, Kukawa, Wulgo, and Kawuri faced challenges to access livelihood. The return/relocation package provided could not sustained them after a month as narrated during focus group discussions conducted by Protection partners. For instance, some of the affected populations that were relocated to Soye received cash and food assistance twice, and there was no further assistance. Moreover, there are restricted movement to engage in livelihood, especially farming. There is a need for post-relocation monitoring and assessment of socio-economic structures of sustenance, protection risks, and mitigation measures that could be employed to resolve any arising issues. In addition, the return and relocation package need to be review to commensurate with the needs on ground and the prevailing situation.
- **Potential Unresolved HLP Issues:** When the camps were closed and families moved to the garrisoned LGAs, incidents of secondary occupation of properties were reported in places such as Bama and Dikwa. As the displacement and security situation remains without significant improvements in the hard-to-reach areas, given that most of the affected population has been in a protracted displacement situation, the potential remains that prolonged secondary occupation and other factors may degenerate into unresolved HLP issues in the future.
- **Forced Family Separation:** Individuals affected by camp closures have experienced family separation when some of their family members were compelled to stay in Maiduguri and search for jobs to cater for their families in the return /relocated locations. Protection monitoring data revealed that 10% of the 16, 111 households assessed in 2023 reported that they have experienced family separation because of the camp closure.
- **Increased Risk for Children, Women and Other Vulnerable Groups:** Due to the unclear or ineffectively implemented relocation plans by the BSG to reintegrate the returned/ relocated IDPs to the return/relocated n locations, limited capacities of the local authorities to adequately assume responsibility for the returned IDPs and limited access to assistance, many displaced children affected by camp closures, have been exposed to heightened risks. This includes adopting negative coping behaviors such as begging on the streets to survive, road accidents, kidnapping, trafficking, transactional sex and sexual violence, among other risks. The Older persons and female heads of households also face challenges in access to specific basic services, tailored to their needs.

### **4. Current situations in the LGAs**

- **Security Situation:** 72% of the 16,111 households in Borno State assessed during protection monitoring in 2023 reported that they would like to return to their areas of origin but at the moment, they feel safe in their current locations (Camps, host communities). The feeling is the same for men, women, boys, and girls. It is important to ensure security is guaranteed in areas of return to avoid onward movement of the population after relocation. The main driver for feeling insecure upon return is the presence of NSAG,

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<sup>3</sup> Ongoing Northeast Nigeria Protection Monitoring System Household assessments conducted from May - November 2023.

crime and attacks, kidnapping, taxation on civilians. Between May and November 2023, 393 incidents have been reported through the protection monitoring system in Borno State, of which 354 are attacks, abductions, and kidnaps by NSAG. Others include seven incidents of unexploded ordnances. Insecurity, presence of NSAGs and incidents of unexploded ordnances continue to pose risks for the forcibly displaced population.

- **Continued Displacement:** As the military continues to retake areas previously held by the NSAG, displacements continue to be recorded. Available records indicate that some 72,633<sup>4</sup> individuals have been displaced in the BAY states with most of them being in Borno State. Until sustainable peace is guaranteed, insecurity will continue to cause displacement of people from the NSAG controlled areas to the existing camps, in spite of efforts to close camps. Additionally, we are also witnessing displacements occurring beyond the borders of Nigeria to neighboring Niger and Cameroon, occasioned by these camp closures. Maraou Camp in Cameroon has registered 12,000 new asylum seekers from Nigeria this year, most of whom indicate forced displacement linked to camp closures with nowhere conducive to go to. It is important that the response mechanism in place to address camp closures foresees this potential and acts in time to manage irregular movements and repeated cycles of displacements.

## 5. Key Protection Concerns:

### 5.1. **Safety and Security in Areas of Relocation**

The security situation in some of the places of return/relocation is a concern and many locations do not have sufficient levels of services available. An inter-agency Return Intension Surveys (RIS) conducted in June 2022 and excerpts from the November 2023 RIS, shows that safety and security remain a primary pre-condition for return to their area of origin as stated by IDPs. It is evident that the Nigeria Military has retaken several towns and villages that were once occupied by NSAGs and as narrated by the Bama LGA Chairmen during the 29 November 2023 workshop in Abuja, IDPs will be relocated in order to make the towns newly retaken by the military functional. He further mentioned that if the IDPs are not relocated to the newly retaken towns, those towns may end up being deserted and that will delay the expulsion of NSAGs from surrounding towns. Past relocation of IDPs and refugees to town newly taken over from NSAGs have shown that the relocation of IDPs to such towns do attract attacks by NSAG unlike when there is only military occupancy. Example of such was relocation of IDPs to Soye, Warabe and Mallam Fatori. In Soye, the day after the first batch of IDPs arrived from Dalori II, some IDPs immediately left Soye to Bama town and Maiduguri due to insecurity because the Government Forces leave after curfew and there was a lack of adequate services in Soye town due to absence of humanitarian actors. Days after IDPs were returned to Soye town, on 22 February 2023 NSAG members intruded the Soye Community and emergency shelters and took away food and non-food items belonging to returnees and the military had to move in. On 11 March 2023, NSAG members were documented harvesting the unripped crops (onions) in Soye and this led to farmers harvesting their crops earlier than they were supposed to in order to avoid further losses and sell the items at a giveaway price. While IDPs from Dalori II were being relocated to Dalori village, NSAGs abducted seven civilians in the farmland in the outskirts of the village. Marte and Kikawa also experience killing if civilians after they were relocated by the BSG

The Borno State Governor visited IDPs in the GSSS Camp in Monguno and promised to close the camp. Despite the high presence of the Nigeria military in Monguno town, attacks by NSAGs continues and therefore attacks can be predicted in locations and the security situation in locations with lesser military personnel presence remains a concern. For example, there was an attack by NSAGs on a military position behind FGGC and Waterboard IDP Camp in Monguno at about 1240 hours on 02 December 2023. A 13-year-old girl was wounded and unconfirmed reports from military sources indicated that two State Security Forces were killed, and their weapons carted away by the NSAGs. Due to the proximity of the attacked location with the UN Humanitarian Hub, all guests and hub workers were moved to the bunker for about 35 minutes before they were asked to go back to their rooms when the shootings subsided. These and other incidents mentioned, show that security remains a major concern and should be taken into consideration as the planned closure of camps evolves.

### **Recommendations:**

- *The **BSG** to ensure that returns/relocations are only undertaken to areas that have a sufficient level of security and freedom of movement as well as access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. Establishment of civilian populations in areas contested by NSAGs remains highly insecure and ill-advised, unless additional measures to counter the prevalent risks are in place. Such efforts should additionally wholly be guided by the rights and choices of IDPs themselves.*
- *For the **BSG** to meaningfully involve the affected IDP populations and the humanitarian community in jointly determining and planning for solutions (return, integration, resettlement to other areas), reflecting the intentions of the IDPs and supporting their voluntary movement.*
- *For the **humanitarian community** to ensure the continued provision of adequate levels of assistance to affected populations as a humanitarian imperative for the duration required until the population can be self-reliant, and which should not constitute a push factor that influences IDPs' decision and voluntariness in terms of relocating to government designated locations.*

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<sup>4</sup> IOM Emergency Tracking tool January - October 2023.

### 5.1.2 Freedom of Movement

IDPs relocated to LGAs by the BSG have experienced serious restrictions of movement due to the military barriers established to prevent the infiltration of NSAG into military control areas. During Focus Group Discussions conducted with relocated IDPs on 29 May 2023 in Konduga and on 18 June 2023, in Soye, relocated IDPs expressed that they feel they are in an open prison where they can walk around the town but cannot easily leave the town to go further and engage in farming due to the risks some of them have experienced. The limited freedom of movement has led to desperation within the IDP communities in the camps and the undermining of existing gender roles, especially with men who are supposed to be breadwinners losing their status within the society. Protection assessments by partners highlighted that men are frustrated that they cannot perform their traditional gender roles as fathers or husbands due to their inability to easily travel outside of the military controlled areas. **The populations living in areas potentially contaminated with explosive ordnances are unable to move freely to engage in any meaningful livelihood** and given that most of the affected population are farmers who are now required to depend on support from humanitarian organizations, life in the IDP camps **remains difficult**. If the camps in the LGAs are closed, **humanitarian architecture dismantled**, and the BSG is not providing livelihood support to the relocated IDPs, the IDPs will be exposed to risks when moving beyond the military set barriers where they will continue to be at risks of kidnapping, deaths or injuries by NSAG or explosive ordnances.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *Given the number of deaths as a result of IDPs or relocated IDPs venturing into locations that are outside the military controlled areas, there is a need to ensure that the closure of camps and relocation of the IDPs to areas newly taken over by the military takes into consideration the safety of the nearby communities and land. Until safety and security measures are guaranteed within surroundings of towns where IDPs will be relocated, such relocations should be reconsidered.*
- *Relocated IDPs should be provided sustainable sources of livelihood to assist in reducing their level of vulnerability and minimizing their exposure to killings, kidnappings by NSAG, and explosive ordnances. A one-off assistance and return/relocated package are insufficient to meet the needs of the population, especially where they may be unable to engage in meaningful livelihood due to insecurity in and around relocation areas.*
- *Support to ensure that the population has access to humanitarian assistance remains key and as an obligation under International Humanitarian law, the GoN is obligated to support the timely and unimpeded access to relief to recall IHL obligations. Therefore, there should be no banning of humanitarian aid, either for those returning to locations, or those who have requested to stay in host communities. Such assistance shall be based on needs and vulnerability. Humanitarians and BSG should ensure that humanitarian organizations can provide lifesaving assistance in all areas where needs are identified.*
- *The GoN to ensure all Nigerians, regardless of their status as displaced or non-displaced individuals, enjoy full freedom of movement.*
- ***OCHA/CMCoord** to advocate the BSG and Nigeria Military for improved freedom of movement in areas of relocation, including more flexible curfews where applicable, to allow the IDPs to conduct livelihood and other activities outside the towns/sites of relocation. To ensure a sustainable solution, restriction of movement should be time-bound and gradually lifted, as the security situation improves.*
- *The GoN, with the support of **humanitarian actors**, to enhance Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) for increased understanding and safe behaviour of relocated IDPs, including for engagement in activities outside military controlled areas and farmlands.*

### 5.1.3 Timeline and accountability to the population

Humanitarian and developmental actors would benefit from an early indication of timelines for the process. The timely clarity to be provided for the intended and planned closure of different camps located in areas where humanitarian actors will serve to ensure the planning of ongoing protection interventions and a smooth transition of services is knitted into the entire process, to establish/reinforce community-based structures where applicable. It would be useful for communities to be provided with clear messaging in different spoken languages (there are a wide variety of tribes living in those camps (Kanuri, Shuwa, Wula and Gamargu, Mandara, Glavda, Shuwa, and Mafa, Lamang, Mandara, Uvahe, Agapalawa, Chinene, Gavva, Marghi, Fulfulde, Maffa Ghihude, Fulanis, Hausa, Kotoko, Higgie, Marghie, and Blacksmiths ) and proper consultation and two-way communications with the displaced populations. Adequate information should be provided to allow for informed decision making. The camp closure process should be properly explained in an inclusive manner ensuring that all the affected population are reached other than only those who are present during consultations and meetings. Specific case issues should also be managed as even though similarly circumstanced, some community members may be more vulnerable than others, hence requiring a measure of added targeted support in the process.

Ensuring that all movements are safe and that people requesting to be locally integrated have alternative options within the host communities to avoid the overstretching of resources and guaranteeing the voluntariness of movements. Consideration should also be given to persons with special needs including persons with disabilities, female headed households, child headed households and older persons.

## Recommendations:

- *Borno State Government to bring on board and explain to the stakeholders including IDPs, humanitarian, development actors and donors the scheduled plans of camp closures to mobilize the most needed support and ensure a more dignified relocation process that is based on safety and voluntariness. Previous camp closures in 2021, and 2022 were not adequately consultative and did not generally speaking, adhere, to the international and national standards set in the IASC Durable Solutions Guidelines and the Nigeria National IDP Policy.*
- *For the **BSG** to meaningfully involve the affected IDP populations and the humanitarian community in jointly determining and planning for solutions (return, integration and resettlement to alternative areas), reflecting the intentions of the IDPs and supporting their voluntary movement.*
- *For the **humanitarian community** to ensure the continued provision of adequate levels of assistance to relocated populations in locations accessible up to a time when they can be self-reliant – which ideally should be for a fixed period of time to allow for a seamless transition. There is a need to ensure that the humanitarian assistance does not constitute a push factor that impacts IDPs' decision and voluntariness in terms of leaving the camps to government designated relocation areas. There is a necessity to find alternatives for people not wishing to leave the camp areas and refusing to relocate into their areas of origin. IDPs are entitled to protection and assistance as per the IASC framework for durable solutions of IDPs.*
- *Support and return/relocation packages should be given to the IDPs returning to government designated relocation areas, and same support should be extended to IDPs who intend to locally integrate in the host communities. There are thousands of IDPs in the host communities of Maiduguri and have never been assisted by the **BSG**.*
- ***The BSG** to ensure that the assistance provided is commensurate to the size of the population being supported with return or relocation and that the needs of the most vulnerable IDPs, including infants, children, the older persons, persons living with disabilities, female and child headed households, are considered.*

### 5.1.4 Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

There are indications that HLP disputes may escalate in the proposed return/relocation LGAs as the BSG enforced camp closure return, and relocation continuous. A recent assessment<sup>5</sup> conducted by the HLP AoR in Borno state on July and August 2023 indicate that, there has been a sharp increase in HLP disputes following the return/relocation of displaced persons in Banki, Dikwa and Monguno. These HLP disputes were mainly attributed to returnees trying to reclaim or retake back their HLP from those occupying their homes or land which has been exacerbated by loss, missing documents, HLP and personal documentation as well as the destruction of the document's registries and records. The resultant effect has been forced eviction and forced displacement of the secondary occupants as the existing HLP dispute resolution mechanisms and actors have limited capacity to intervene in these disputes. With more camps expected to be closed, the situation in the return/relocation LGAs might worsen if certain critical HLP concerns are not addressed.

The conflict has led to a widespread destruction and damage to HLP, ruins of business infrastructure, thereby, hindering displaced affected population from voluntary returning even with the slight improvement in the security conditions of these places. Also, most of these LGAs have now turned into garrison towns with very limited access to land for shelter, farmland, and other livelihood activities. The combined effect of these challenges has now resulted in very poor HLP living conditions for the affected persons with majority of them living in highly congested informal site with no access to basic and essential services. Even though the Government has made some efforts in rehabilitating and constructing new structures, the houses are still insufficient.

## Recommendations

- *There is need for the BSG to ensure the **Provision of Land for Livelihood Activities**: Adequate provisions for land for farming and livelihood activities must be ensured for sustainable relocation/ returns. **Phased Return**, prioritizing those with access to their HLP, followed by those to be accommodated in government provided shelters is recommended.*
- ***Strengthening the existing Dispute Resolution Capacity** remains key to effectively addressing emerging challenges in areas of return/relocation.*
- ***For BSG, in collaboration with humanitarian and development partners, to support HLP documentation** to strengthen tenure security of the affected population.*

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<sup>5</sup> Analysis of Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) issues in Banki, Dikwa, Jere, Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), and Monguno in Borno State, North-East Nigeria.

### 5.1.5 Mine Action

The closure of camps leads to people returning to areas, host communities and/or places of origin, that are potentially impacted by the presence of mines and other explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines of improvised nature, threats brought about by the protracted conflict. Mine Action partners have noted a sharp increase in the number of explosive ordnance incidents before and after relocations, including an 883 per cent increase in Konduga LGA. Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) is not delivered to people being relocated to such areas nor are there any humanitarian survey and clearance activities conducted to ensure safe returns. The number of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) Nigerian Police Officers trained on international standards to respond to emergency tasks are severely lacking.

Borno State, particularly in and around IDP camps, faces a significant threat from Explosive Ordnance, despite the major mine action/EORE efforts deployed by Mine Action actors. A recent Northeast assessment conducted by the Mine Action AoR indicates a high contamination level of EO in the returning LGAs, contributing to a substantial increase of 242% in EO-related accidents in northeast in 2023. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need to prioritize safety and security during the potential relocation of IDPs. Current conditions necessitate urgent and unrestricted access for humanitarian mine action teams to conduct EORE operations, and the Nigerian Police/Army to conduct clearance operations in identified LGAs within Borno State, beyond the few towns where IDPs will be returned to and extended to nearby communities and environments.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *To ensure the safety of IDPs, returnees and host community members, EORE needs to be delivered.*
- *Humanitarian survey and clearance activities need to be conducted in areas of return/ relocated and surrounding environments.*
- *Increase the number of EOD Nigerian Police Officers trained to international standards and deploy them to areas of return/ relocated to respond to any emergency tasks in the absence of survey and clearance activities.*

#### **6. Overall Recommendations to the Humanitarian Community:**

- **The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)** to utilize the data, including the data included in this advocacy note, for evidence-based engagement and advocacy with the BSG to ensure compliance with established national, regional and global frameworks and standards and adherence to principles on camp closures and durable solutions (returns, integration). This should be done in close coordination with the donor community and development partners, ensuring a joined-up approach.
- Ensure coordination and joint analysis with the stabilisation actors as an opportunity to highlight humanitarian and protection concerns. This will provide a space for coordination and integrated approaches through a shared do-no-harm principle.
- **Humanitarian actors** to ensure continued advocacy for compliance with standards of camp closure continues and to ensure that no additional protection risks for IDPs are created or that adequate protection and govt-led/owned structures are in place to adequately respond to any potential arising issues.
- **Humanitarian actors** to continue to collect information on camp closures, the intentions and experiences of IDPs and the situation in return/relocation areas, and produce coherent analytical products on a consistent basis that put forward clear, actionable data, thereby overcoming the currently scattered nature of information and analyses. Information gathered will be used for advocacy and to plan protection response.
- **Humanitarian actors**, given the increased number of IDPs likely to involuntarily return/relocate to areas that may be hard to reach/inaccessible to humanitarians, to operationalize the HCT's Position Paper on potentially involuntary returns/relocations to ensure a coherent humanitarian response across different agencies and sectors. This includes outlining a methodology with thresholds/red lines, which would exceptionally trigger a humanitarian response aimed at upholding the humanitarian imperative of saving lives while balancing the principle of not doing harm through condoning involuntary population movements.
- There is a need for joint (gov, dev, peace, and hum actors) Area Based service mapping, and mapping of capacity and gaps, that will support all actors to address those gaps. A joint access assessment in areas of relocation remains crucial,
- The **Protection Sector and its partners**, along with **Camp Coordination** and **Camp Management (CCCM) Sector**, to ensure pre- and post-relocation/return monitoring to understand the impact of the relocation/return on the affected population, identify protection risks preventing and mitigate any rights violations ensuing from the relocation/return, and advocate for the GoN's and other sectors' required interventions. Monitoring of where IDPs go to after camp closures over a period of time will also be critical in evaluating the success of the movements and placements extended to the IDP population.

#### **7. Overall recommendations to the Donor Community:**

- **Donors** to advocate for the return and/or relocation of IDPs to assured secure locations and a phased and informed approach to the closure of camps, adhering to certain basic minimum standards and heightened protection vigilance. Such engagement and advocacy should be done in close coordination with the HCT and humanitarian actors to ensure a joined-up approach.

- The **donor community** to provide political and diplomatic advocacy support to ensure the compliance of the BSG/GoN with international standards and best practices on relocations and returns, while also strategically aligning donor support to stabilization actors to plan for and provide affected populations with safe, alternative relocation options.
- **Donors** to support principled humanitarian action through targeted funding that is based on needs and vulnerability of those in relocated communities, those who opted to move into informal settlements and host communities.
- Donors funding the development actors, need to ensure that their funding complies with their own obligations in terms of do-no-harm and human rights approaches.

#### **8. Recommendations for the UN Special Advisor on Solutions and for Developmental Actors:**

- The office of the UN Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement should advocate that the BSG ensures protection of the IDPs as a key factor in its pursuit of camp closures and that avid attempts are made to ensure that the camp closures do not expose IDPs to further harm as experienced in previous return/relocation conducted by the BSG.
- Advocacy to the BSG to ensure that the search for Solutions is broadened, in the best interest of the displaced population and that solutions for IDPs are not limited to return or relocation but explore all available options. Support to be provided to IDPs if they choose to remain out of camps in other places that hold a promise for discontinued further displacement.
- As the search for solutions continue, there is a need to recognize that displacement will continue in some form, in many parts of Borno State, and there is a need to ensure that developmental actors work along with humanitarian actors to ensure that those newly displaced or in protracted and compelling protection/vulnerability situations are provided protection and assistance, especially if camps are no longer existing, wherever they find themselves, but in a targeted and measured manner/timeframe. There is a need to ensure that the planned closure of camps considers accommodating newly displaced individuals, especially those coming from NSAG controlled areas.
- Developmental actors to work along with humanitarian agencies to ensure that initiatives undertaken by developmental actors are protection sensitive and that community participation is key in developmental programs and activities. Equally important to is to ensure synergy and a good transition flow between humanitarian and developmental assistance.