



Killing and Abduction of Civilians In Borno State, Nigeria

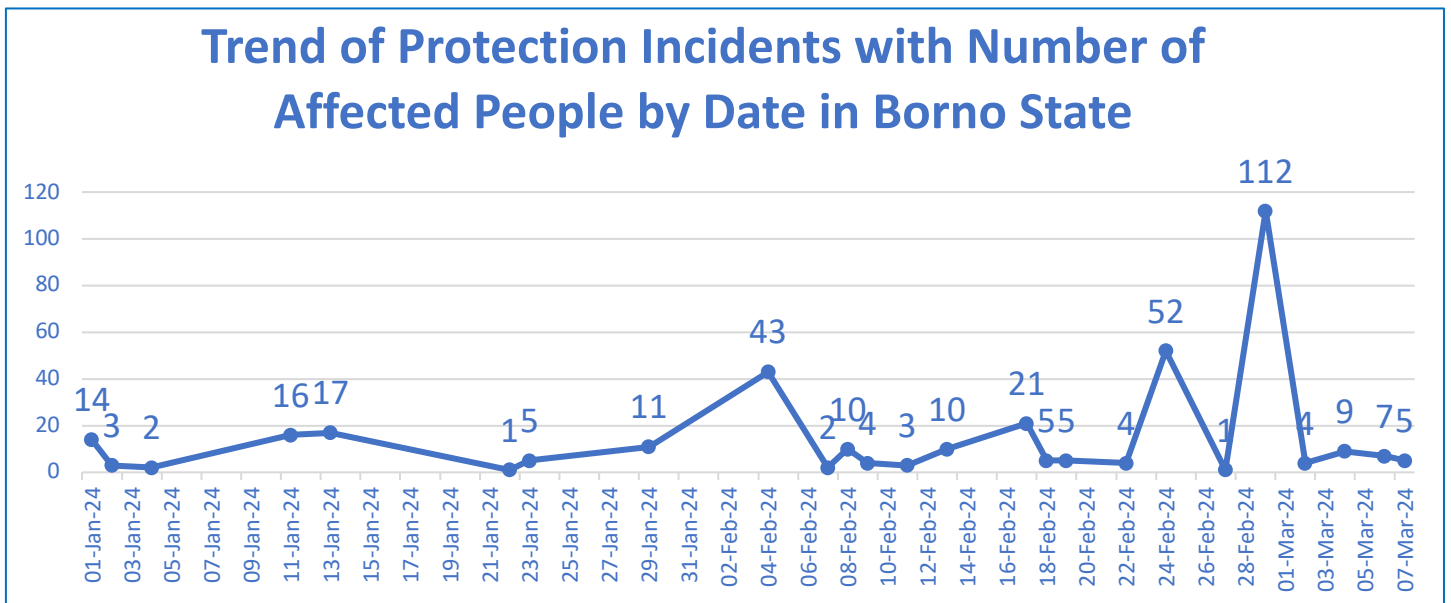
26 March 2024

SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS

Increased attacks on civilians continue to raise alarming Protection concerns across Local Government Areas (LGA) of Borno state, North-East Nigeria. Protection partners reported 55 Protection incidents of attacks on civilians between 1st January and 14th March 2024, particularly in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs of Borno state. The reported incidents included 176 attacks on civilians and another unlawful killing of IDPs, returnees, and host community members and 195 abductions, kidnappings, and forced disappearance of men and girls and boys particularly aged 12 to 17 years.

The attacks affected a total of 371 individuals, including the death of 60 civilians and injuries of 69 individuals across the LGAs. In addition to fatalities, injuries, and abductions, the attacks involved theft and destruction of personal property such as the looting and burning of 77 bicycles, 5 tricycles, and 1 truck and the stealing of 170 livestock belonging to IDPs, IDP returnees, and the host community. The attacks also displaced 612 individuals seeking safety in neighboring camps, wards, and LGAs due to the fear of attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) .

The unlawful killings, abduction, and theft and destruction of civilian properties primarily perpetrated by NSAGs targeted IDPs, IDP returnees, and host community members in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs.



Graph 1: overall incidents trend collected and reported through the Protection Incident Report (PIR) by Protection partners between 1st January and 14th March 2024.

The protection incidents recorded between 1st January and 10th March 2024 in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs are summarized below:

1. On 1st January 2024, between 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **seven men were killed** by NSAG members at Amdaga, Mbomba Kache and Gada Tashan Damboa villages of Wala Warabe ward. The attack occurred when the returnees went to fetch firewood about 8 – 10 km away from Gwoza town. Many people who were fetching firewood in the two locations ran away and escaped the attack, those unable to escape were killed instantly. The suspected NSAGs also took **two tricycles (jega) and two bicycles** belonging to civilians.
2. On 2nd January 2024, NSAGs attacked IDP returnees who went to fetch firewood in Busuwa located 2 km away from Bama, **three men** were injured in the attack, and referred to Maiduguri for further medical assistance.
3. On January 4, 2024, **two 15-year-old adolescent boys** were kidnapped on their way back home from the farm at Gada Tashan Damboa. The boys are DPs from the GSS IDP camp in Gwoza LGA.
4. On 11 January 2024, NSAG members **killed four men, kidnapped one individual, and attacked five** IDPs/returnees who went to fetch firewood, between 12:00-1:00 pm at Fadagwe village under Bullabulin ward about 4 – 15km away from Gwoza town. NSAG members took away **one tricycle, seventeen bicycles, and one truck** belonging to the IDPs living in the Wakane IDP camp and IDP returnees living in the Host community. On the same date, NSAG attacked **six men and killed one IDP returnee** in Bammari village of Zari ward in Mobbar LGA.
5. On 13 January 2023, NSAG killed **six men and women** and **injured one individual** who was collecting firewood and accessing farmland in Balangaje, Jige/Kuranabasa, and Kwak-kwak area of Pulka which is about 5 – 10 km away from Gwoza town. Similarly, a group of **ten women** from GSSSS camp Bama went to fetch firewood at about 11:30 am and were attacked by NSAGs at Nguro Soye axis, Bama LGA.
6. On 22 January 2024, **one man** was attacked by NSAGs at Bulamari host community Rann while buying goats from Fulani herders in the Bush, luckily the man safely escaped from the incident.
7. On 23 January 2023, **four men were kidnapped** by NSAG at Bulabulin Gwoza Wakane Ward, Fadagwe estimated to be 15 km away from Gwoza town. **15 bicycles** were taken from IDPs and host communities who were fetching firewood in the area. Similarly, in Dikwa **one male IDP** of about 20 years of age from 1000 camp was abducted while he went to the bush to source firewood and other raw materials as a means of livelihood around a village called Afuye 12 km away from Dikwa town.
8. On 25 January 2024, **two Jega tricycles burned, and twenty-four bicycles** were looted in Uvaha Hambagda.
9. On 29 January 2023, **ten farmer** IDPs and members of the Host community died by IED explosion on their way to a farm in Firgi around 2 km away from Pulka town, Gwoza LGA. On the same date, around 10:15 a.m. **one IDP man** from GSSSS Bama IDPs Camp was killed by NSAGs while working on a field and gathering firewood in Sabbasabuwa, which is nine kilometres from Bama town.
10. On 4th February 2024, **twenty-six girls and boys aged 12 to 17 years old**, were abducted around 3:00 p.m. by alleged NSAGs at Kusheraha Duma, about 6 km from Gwoza town, Bulabulin Gwoza Wakane Ward. They went in search of mangoes, fruit, and firewood. They are all IDPs in GSS Camp and Gwoza wakane camp.
11. On 7th February 2024, **two male IDP returnees**, living in the Hausari host community were killed by alleged NSAGS around 2:00 p.m. at Lakwadisa, Hambagda/Limankara/Jaje Ward, estimated to be 12 km away from Gwoza town, who went in search of tamarind (Tsamiya) and baobab fruit (Yayan Kuka).
12. On 8th February 2024, **six returnee men, aged 25–59 years old** who were living in the Hausari host community were killed by alleged NSAGs at Stanley Road Hambagda Ward, about 4 km from Gwoza town, while other **four men** IDPs were shot and injured

- by the alleged NSAGs in the same location and referred to receive treatment at a specialized hospital.
13. On 9th February 2024, **two men** were killed by the military on their way to the farm with a tricycle at the Firgi farm outskirts of Pulka town, the deceased were misidentified as NSAG members and shot from a distance when they were following a prohibited route and before the military gave clearance for movement.
 14. On 11th February 2024, around 11:30 a.m. **one male** IDP from Zannari, from Arabic ISSS camp was abducted about 6 km from Ngala. On the same date, **one boy and one man** killed during mid night at Hausari Tampul war Askira/Uba.
 15. On 13th February 2024, around 12:37 p.m. suspected NSAGs members seized **10 bicycles** from IDPs who went to fetch firewood around Sandiya village which is about 9km away from Damboa town.
 16. On 17th February 2024, at around 11:00 a.m., **two men, aged 25 to 50 years old**, were killed by the alleged NSAGs at Jige, Hambagda ward, estimated to be 8 km away from Gwoza town. On the same day, suspected NSAG members abducted **seventeen adolescent girls aged 12–17 years old**, who were IDPs residing in GSS camp in Gwoza (10) and GSSSS Camp in Bama (7). The affected girls went in search of local fruits (Magariya and Yayan Kuka) and to fetch firewood for livelihood support to their families.
 17. On 18th February 2024, at 2:00 p.m., **three women aged between 25-59 and two adolescent girls aged between 12-17** IDPs were abducted while working on a field and gathering firewood in Sabbasabuwa, which is 9 km from Bama town.
 18. On 19th February 2024 at about 11:00 a.m., NSAGs abducted **five IDPs (3 women and 2 girls)** from GSSSS Camp Bama while fetching firewood around 5 km from Bama.
 19. On 22nd February 2024, at about 10:00 p.m. unknown gunmen invaded a village (Alhaji Buremti), which is 6 km from Damasac town in Chamba ward Mobbar LGA. They **killed one person, injured three persons**, and abducted an unknown number of persons. They also carted away the civilians' food, NFIs, and valuables.
 20. On 24th February 2024, a NSAG ambushed **over fifty people (13 women, 37 men)** as they travelled 28 km from Ngala to the displaced village of Garal. The attack occurred at approximately 3 p.m. The victims, who were originally from the communities of Gamboru, Jillam, Wofio, Wulgo, Wurge, and Blabutiye, are now residing in the ISS camp and the Gamboru host community. They were all beaten by the NSAG, who also set their **thirty bicycles** on fire.
 21. On 27th February 2024 around noon, NSAGs attacked IDPs and **killed one man** while fetching firewood in Sabsawa, 3 km from Bama.
 22. On the 29th of February 2024: over **200 IDPs** from ISS, Arabic camps and Baban sansani IDP camp, were ambushed at around 2:30 p.m. in the bushes close to Bukar-Mairam located 15-20 km to the border with Chad. **111 individuals (97 girls and 14 boys) aged 13 to 25 years old were abducted by the NSAG at Wurge village, about 15 Km from Ngala**, while they were gathering firewood as a means of livelihood to support their families. The oldest members, those over 25 years old, were released that same day to go back home. Eight boys escaped from their captors when they were sent on errands to look for fruits in the bush and reunited with their families with trauma. According to the escaped boys, the girls under abduction were later separated from the boys, and have been facing critical food, hygiene, dignity, and survival conditions.
 23. On 2nd March 2024, around noon NSAG members abducted **four IDP women and girls** living in 20 housing camps who went to search for a local fruit in Hambagda village which is approximately two km away from Gwoza town. The girls' ages range from 13 to 15, while the woman is 20 years old.
 24. On 4th March 2024, NSAG members attacked IDPs who went to fetch firewood at Gwalagwa village under Hambagda/Limanakara/Jaje ward approximately 10 km away from Gwoza town. NSAG members allegedly took away **nine bicycles** belonging to IDPs from the GSS camp. No injuries or loss of lives were recorded.

25. On 6 March 2024, around 11:30 p.m, at Mairamri, which is located one km away from Soye Village BAMA LGA, NSAGs killed **three individuals (two men and one woman) between the ages of 25-59 and injured four men between the ages of 18 – 59**. Property, animals, and other necessities were seized by the NSAGs.
26. On 7 March 2024 around 1:00 a.m., NSAG members attacked IDPs in Nguro soye ward of Bama LGA about 7 km away from Bama town and killed **three individuals (one woman and two men) and injured two individuals (one woman and one man)**. They also carted away some livestock (sheep) from the affected community.
27. On 11th March 2024, a NSAG attacked a group of herdsmen in Nguro-soye ward of Bama and carted away approximately **150 livestock, including cows, goats, and rams**. The herdsmen tracked the NSAG, which resulted in the deaths of three persons among the herdsmen. Presently, the herdsmen have been displaced from Soye to an area situated between Bama and Konduga.
28. On 14th March 2024, around 2:00 p.m. NSAG members attacked two households Soye community Bama LGA, and took away about **20 livestock, consisting of goats and sheep**.

METHODOLOGY

Protection Incident Reporting (PIR), Protection Monitoring Reports, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted by Protection partners were utilized to analyze the incidents affecting civilians in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs of Borno state. Protection Incident Reporting (PIR), and Protection Monitoring Reports are major Protection tools that provide rich information on the detailed description of the incident, persons affected and situation/impact of those affected, their primary Protection needs, and support required, plus recommendations to help mitigate related harm witnessed and reported.



To reinforce the analysis of the information gathered through the reporting tools, Protection Monitors conducted different FGDs and KIIs on the protection incidents that have been occurring during the reporting period.

FGD at ISS camp Naala with a group of Women. Source GISCOR

In Gwoza, on the 13th, 15th and 19th February 2024 partners conducted four sessions of FGDs and KIIs that reached 40 individuals (29 men and 11 women) mixing returnees (from Hambagda, Dugwhede, Guduf, ville, Matakam and Kirewa), 19 men and one woman living in TC Gadamayo) and 20 IDPs (10 women and 10 men from Balgene, Gathla, Bula Kurma, Bula Waziri, Gobara and Madube of Gwoza LGA living in GSS Camp) and two sessions of KIIs with (one woman and one man) in the same community. FGDs and KIIs were also carried out in Pulka where two separate sessions of FGDs were conducted with 20 individuals (10 men and 10 women) living in Damara camp B and A, Umbaza camp A and originated from Ngoshe, Ashigashiya, Jimini, Kirawa, Ndaba, Wigzhe, Bokko Timte, Kwal-Kwal, Angon Fada, Majuwane, Kwashare and Bulakuli communities and two sessions of KIIs with two men that have some influence on the community.

Similarly, in Ngala Protection partners conducted 8 FGDs on the 20th and 21st of February 2024 and on 14th March 2024, the FGDs targeted 148 individuals (42 women, 46 men, 30 girls, and 30 boys) across Arabic, ISS, and Zulum IDP camps. The discussions facilitated ensured diversity in terms of age, gender, and social status.

The objectives of the discussions sought to determine the level of protection threats in the affected locations and to determine the impact of the killing and the abduction on the individuals and the community. It also aimed to identify the vulnerable groups that are at higher risk of threat – where priority protection interventions will need to be urgently reinforced.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT

The conflict between the Government of Nigeria (GoN) and NSAGs in North-East Nigeria enters its 14th year, creating a protracted humanitarian and protection crisis affecting millions of people. The protection of civilians remains a major concern, with people in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) continuing to face persistent NSAG attacks, including abductions and killings, widespread insecurity, continuous displacement, increased explosive ordnance incidents, and risks, camp closure and relocations, and limited access to basic services among others.

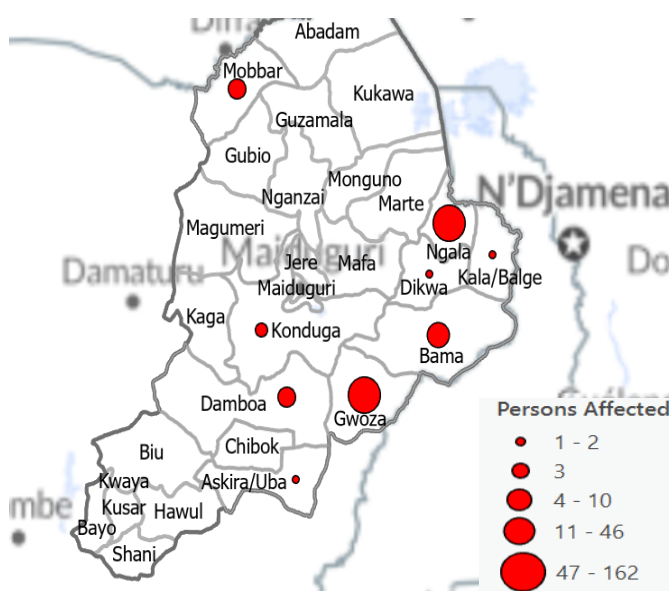
About 2.7 million people¹, 1.8 million IDPs, and 0.9 million returnees are residing in Borno state which is considered as the epicenter of the crisis across the BAY states. Across Borno state, displaced populations living in different circumstances and settlement types, including in official camps, even inside overcrowded reception centers within these camps, within the host community, in informal sites, resettlement communities, and rehabilitated villages.

The humanitarian operations mostly focus on the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, and garrison towns in Local Government Areas (LGAs). Insecurity hinders access to people in need, leaving the delivery of assistance confined to garrison towns and their immediate surroundings in government-controlled areas.

The Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) are concentrated in garrison towns, providing localized security for civilians. Overland movement between towns and along main supply routes, such as the Maiduguri-Monguno, Bama-Pulka-Gwoza, Maiduguri-Damboia, and Maiduguri-Damaturu roads, is risky due to NSAG attacks, the risk of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and illegal vehicle checkpoints that extort a tax from travelers, abduct them and/or highjack cargo.

Violence and insecurity continue to deeply impact the ability of civilians to enjoy freedom and safety of movement in Borno state. In some garrison towns, IDPs and returnees cannot freely move out of the camps without obtaining clearance from the camp security and Government forces and are expected to be back at the camp at specific times, limiting the extent to which they can live normal lives and fend for

LGA Affected by NSAG Attacks in Borno State



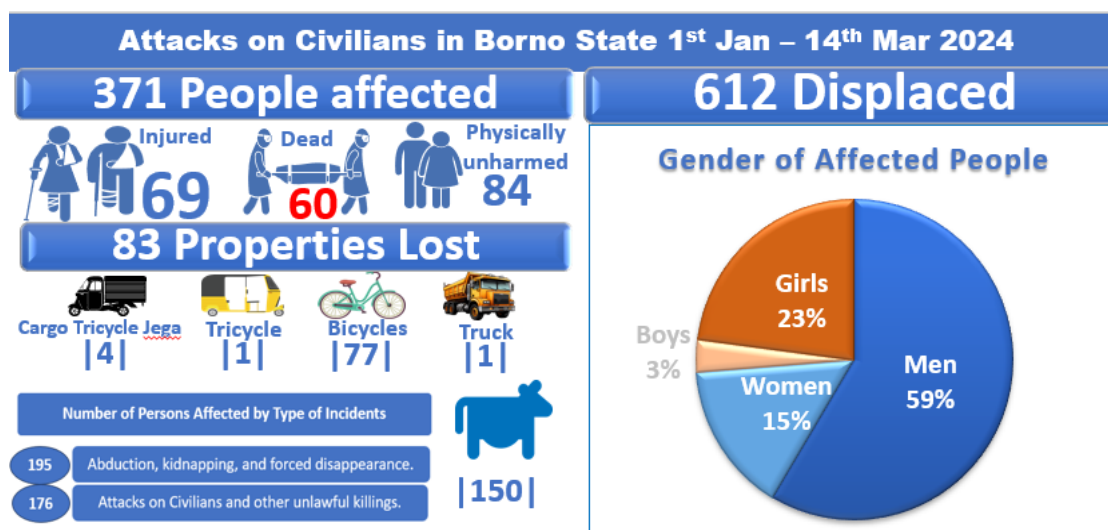
¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) DTM round 43 and 44, June 2022 and February 2023.

themselves outside existing constrained and limited support systems in place. Depending on the IDP camp location, civilian movements require armed escorts for roads given the high level of insecurity. As such, people sometimes have to wait for days for an armed escort, which has created barriers to their access to basic services and at times has posed risks to their lives. Movements in areas that do not require armed escorts equally remain restricted and unsafe for the civilian population.

High levels of insecurity coupled with ongoing displacement, limited freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities, and low levels of government and humanitarian services have worsened the situation of the displaced population across Borno state and made the realization of sustainable solutions a pipe dream, yet to be fully realized.

The IDPs and IDP returnees' safety and search for livelihood opportunities and access to farmlands within Borno state becomes difficult and endangers the lives of the affected population at the cost of attacks and fatalities. NSAG's unlawful attack, abduction, and killing of civilians, especially those going about livelihood activities has become a prevalent Protection concern of the displaced population in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs of Borno state.

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENTS



Increased attacks on civilians were recorded between 1st January and 14th March 2024 in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs of Borno state. 176 attacks on civilians and another unlawful killing and 195 abductions, kidnappings, and forced disappearance of men, girls, and boys were reported since January 2024. The attacks affected a total of 371 individuals including the death of 60 civilians and injuries of 69 individuals. The reported attacks on civilians were allegedly perpetrated by NSAGs. Civilians killed, injured, abducted, and kidnapped in the bushes while fetching firewood, on the way to their farmland, and in search of mangoes, tamarinds, and baobab local fruits.

At the outset, only men seemed to be targeted, yet since January 2024, the incidents affected all men, women, boys, and girls, particularly the abductions increasingly targeting adolescent girls between the ages of 12 to 17 years. NSAGs also stole and destroyed the personal properties of IDPs, IDP returnees, and the host community members including the looting and burning of 77 bicycles, 5 tricycles, and 1 truck and the stealing of 170 livestock.

The majority of the incidents occurred during daylight hours in the morning between 10:00 - 12:00, and in the afternoon between 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Eyewitnesses were able to link the

NSAGs to the incident due to their physical appearances: men dressed in black uniforms and red caps and others with caps that contained an inscription that is known as “Ba-sulhu” which means “no reconciliation or resolution”. They would have carried guns which are presumed to be AK47. In one of the incidents that happened in Gwoza, based on the survivors’ testimonies, a new tactic has emerged the alleged NSAGs wore female clothes (hijab) to disguise themselves as female community members who went to pick up firewood, which made the male community members go further in the farmlands allowing other alleged members of NSAG to open fire on them.

All incident scenes attacks on civilians are occurred roughly 5-20 kilometers from Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala towns, which mainly perpetrated by NSAGs while the military committed one incident at the Firgi farm outskirts of Pulka town.

NSAG attacks in rural areas, cultivated lands, and bushes have been recurrent since 2017 in most of the affected LGAs, causing fear among farmers and IDPs. Based on the community perceptions, the main reasons for the increased attacks could be related to the harvest season. Indeed, NSAGs would be intending to transport through the stolen bicycles and tricycles and loot the harvested crops such as beans, maize, ground nuts, and rice, planted by the civilian population over the past months to trade them in Cameroon and Madagali. Some of them have considered restricting their movements and productions during the farming season from May to September and September to February for irrigation farming. Some people feel it has nothing to do with the farm products but see it as a retaliation against the military offenses against the NSAGs particularly in the Mandara mountain camp. Civilians are seen as their soft targets, with none of those abducted or killed having any connection with the military. In Gwoza, some of the community members perceived that the increased attacks could be in connection with the NSAGs honey that was looted by the CJTFs in Gardan Dugwale 5 kilometers away from Gwoza town. Although security forces might be aware of all incidents that occurred in in the different locations, there are so far no plans to mitigate these reoccurring acts of killings and abductions.

The community perception also links the increase in incidents to the reasons that the NSAGs are pendular movers, sometimes fleeing to other locations far from the military after causing high-security tension. The community feels that currently, the NSAGs are specifically targeting areas where the population has access to firewood. Nevertheless, their mode of operation sometimes fluctuates, although there are times when they intend to kill, and other times rather to collect victims’ valuable items. When they encounter civilians within the age range of 13 to 40 years boys, girls, men, and women they tend to abduct them prioritizing the youngest ones, they particularly select boys and girls between 13-25 age range and release the others, which would appear to be linked to forced recruitment of children into NSAGs, contrary to international humanitarian law provisions. NSAG also started tactics of persuading the displaced peoples to acquire dry firewood on the promise that they would be safe and then surround and abduct IDPs after moving a little further into the bushes. Tree cutting also seems to be an additional trigger, as NSAGs are using them as hideouts, hence populations cutting trees are particularly at risk as they fear being exposed to militaries and CJTF.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The impact of the incidents had created fear among the IDPs in camps and the returnees living in the host community, with many of them afraid to fetch firewood or engage in any farming activities because of the attacks from NSAGs killing and abducting people. In some LGAs many of the IDPs continue to access the bushes regardless of the security threat because cutting firewood is their only means of livelihood and those who restrict their movements find it difficult to live in this situation, as it affects their ability to meet their most basic needs. Some men, women, and teenage boys and girls (9-17 years) engage in other jobs, such as cutting stones for sale, and other hard labor, including carrying loads at the border to cross to

Cameroon, where they are exploited and are paid NGN 500 or less per day, whereby increasing the risks of trafficking and exploitation. While women and girls (12-17 years) engage in cheap labor, such as going to a milling machine to sieve grains (Bakace) for NGN150 per day for a bag of 80 kg. Young people and women are involved in transportation on tricycles or cap-making businesses earning between 100 to 3,000 naira per month, while some are having challenges starting an alternative business due to lack of funds. Summarily, whatever income is made by those earning a living of any sort remains very minimal and subjugates this population to a hand-to-mouth existence for whatever amount they make. It does not completely erode their immediate and far-reaching vulnerabilities, nor does it make the possibility of development and peace realization as tangible as it should be, as envisaged.

Some IDPs are multiply displaced to nearby villages and LGAs seeking safety and fearing the attacks. Among the returnees, a few are planning to leave the town for another state because of the hardship, as they are not receiving food assistance, have a high cost of living, and run the risk of being killed by going to farmland to bring back firewood. The victims of the incidents are traumatized and in psychological and emotional distress, while some of them have engaged in negative coping mechanisms such as begging, hawking, and survival sex. Women and adolescent girls have been reported to engage in survival sex, especially IDPs, to be able to meet their basic needs, as they fear abductions and killings if they try to access the bushes. This happens to both IDPs and host communities, with prevalence among the IDPs population who engage in survival sex due to lack of access to basic needs and livelihood options.

There has been an increase in criminality (stealing of livestock, bicycles, foodstuff, and humanitarian community assistance such as solar panels at water points) within the camps since the attacks at farmlands occurred and impacts the population's access to farmlands and the bush to fetch firewood and fruits.

The toll of what appears to be impunity or security coverage gaps from NSAGs and perpetrators of violence emboldens the insecurity status quo and as reflected, many people persons are increasingly being impacted.

ANALYSIS OF INCIDENTS

The attacks on civilians incidents are considered a high-priority Protection risk considering the magnitude of their impact on the community and the recurrent increased occurrence in a short timeframe. It is perceived that these incidents could prevent people from harvesting irrigation products and firewood so that NSAGs can utilize the crops for their purposes. It is also suspected that the theft of bicycles and tricycles is being used to facilitate the movement of NSAG members within inaccessible areas such as the Zambisa axis and the farm products where NSAGs are suspected to be located.

The NSAGs are aware that many people are not receiving food assistance, and the only option for most people is to go to farms to collect firewood and other fruits as the only means of subsistence. NSAGs appear to be primarily interested in pursuing civilians, notably men and women between the ages of 24 and 45 as well as teenage boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 17. They encircle public spaces where the host community and IDPs have access to frequently gather fruit or firewood from various locations.

The community shared that because of the culture and perception that women would not be the primary target of suspected NSAGs, they adapted a schedule when going to the farm, hunters (community-organized groups that know the bushes) are the primary persons to go, followed by men, and then women with an interval of 20 minutes between them. As a method to mitigate the risks of killing and attacks, most women and men go to the farm in big groups.

The community members are observed to be living in fear of losing a family member, a neighbor, or an acquaintance, according to the key informants. Abductions targeting children

between the age of 10-17 exposed them to heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and forced recruitment. A lot of them have been staying away from farming and firewood fetching activities, but others continue going to those areas since cutting firewood is their only source of income. This led to some tensions in the community and a number of the impacted individuals have turned to negative coping mechanisms including begging, hawking, and survival sex. The attacks and associated fears and safety risks resulted in the secondary displacement of IDPs to other nearby villages and LGAs.

There have been no restrictions on movements enforced by security personnel. According to humanitarian actors, the IDPs cannot be forcefully restricted from moving; however, they have been advised to avoid dangers, especially outside the military trenches. There are not enough farmlands to accommodate all the farmers (host communities, returnees, and IDPs). The farmlands that are close to the military trenches belonged to mostly host communities. Returnees and IDPs, as they are from other villages within the LGA, are given far-away farmlands estimated to be 10 - 15 kilometers from the center and they must pay a fee to access them. The amount depends on the size of the land.

PROTECTION MONITORING AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Based on the FGDs and KIIs, the participants mentioned that some community members encountered the NSAGs in different locations (Stanley Road, Gda Tashan Damboa Hambagda, Uvaha, and Wala Warabe of Gwoza, and Firgi and Kwalkwal of Pulka). Additional incidents were recorded, but no precise dates have been recorded:

- Seven women went to fetch firewood and they met with NSAGs who asked them 'to drop their axes, to remove their shoes because they had stepped on the holy land and would be infidels'. The alleged NSAG members later abducted one girl aged 12-17 years old and one young woman aged 18-25 years old.
- There have been additional cases, where women aged 40-60 years old would be asked to pull off their clothes including earrings and would then be sent back to the community naked.
- 32 adolescents and women from the transit camp aged 14–40 years who are said to be recent new arrivals have returned to the bushes willingly to meet their husbands - suspected to belong to NSAGs - because life would be 'easier for them in the bushes', said one of the participants.
- The participants mentioned that the NSAG members would spread around in the bushes, some hiding on trees, waiting for those that would fetch firewood or farm to attack them.
- According to the participants, suspected NSAGs looted people's farm products (corn, groundnut and sesame) at night while others were harvested by the NSAG.
- Four men (returnees living in the host community) went to obtain firewood and encountered NSAGs. They collected money from them and their bicycles. One of them, who had a cigarette in his pocket, was killed 'because if they allowed him to live, he would not repent' according to community members. In another incident, NSAG collected money, a bicycle, and a handset from another man.
- There was an incident involving two adolescent boys from Gobara (aged 12–17) suspected to have gone back to the bush on February 10, 2024, from GSS camp. One of the adolescent boys went with his father's bicycles, which he used to procure firewood. According to the father, of one of the adolescents, his son, had mentioned earlier that he might go back to the bush because of the hardships he had experienced as they were not collecting food.
- According to the participants, suspected NSAGs in Wubadiza Ajari/Guduf wards looted over 40 goats on February 12, 2024, belonging to returnees living in Hausari and Ajari host communities.

- On February 16, 2024, two farmer returnees who went to their irrigation farm at Gada Tashan Damboa run away from and survived an attempted attack by alleged NSAGs when they saw them coming from afar.
- According to some of the survivors of the attack that led to the abduction of the 14 girls at Kusheraha Duma (mountain area), parents of the girls were informed that over 25 girls went in search of mangoes, and some of them had to run while carrying their water. Among the 14 girls, 1 of them managed to escape on 24th February 2024. Some of the participants confirmed that, normally, Sunday (the day when the abduction occurred) is the market day in Gwoza, therefore not many people go to the farm, which might have been an opportunity for NSAGs. The parents and grandparents of the abducted girls are deeply worried that, since the incidents, they have not heard anything concerning the girls.
- The community observed men and adolescent boys aged between 12 and 19 years old are the major groups targeted to be killed by the NSAGs. The NSAGs have been observed to open fire at the sight of men, while in a few cases, they would have abducted men if they had surrendered and been released if they had money or a handset with them. On the other hand, young women between the ages of 12-35 years old are forcefully taken as wives; however, the elderly ones are harassed and stripped naked before being asked to return to their communities. Their items, such as clothes, shoes, and earrings, are collected by the NSAGs, but it is unclear which message they are trying to send.

As a result of the series of attacks, the security forces are alternating days when people can go to fetch firewood in some locations. Sometimes women are restricted, some days only bicycles are allowed, while on other days tricycles and push-push (wheelbarrows) can be used. Presently the community has hunters (who are additions of the CJTF but not members) that will normally go early to the bushes to observe the presence of the NSAGs and come back to report to the security forces whether farmers could be allowed to go and fetch firewood or not. In some instances, where their presence was noticed, people would not be allowed that day to go to the farmlands, and farmers could only access farmlands from 10:00- 3:00 pm to return to avoid nightfall, as their chances of being attacked or killed increased at nightfall. The community has been said to adhere to the timings.

The IDPs living in camps and the returnees living in the host community had become fearful as a result of the incidents, community members expressed fears of being raped, killed, or kidnapped, and roads were dangerous because of the threat of IEDs or NSAG attacks using weapons (such as guns and cutlasses). Some of the victims are traumatized and in psychological and emotional distress, while some of them have engaged in negative coping mechanisms.

PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE AND VULNERABILITIES IDENTIFIED

The affected communities did not receive humanitarian assistance apart from psychosocial first aid support and referrals of survivors by Protection partners operating in the affected LGAs. The government provided cash and in-kind support (₦10,000 with one bag of 25 Kg of cereal) for those returned from NSAG abduction in Ngala LGA and there was an instance where the government supported families of the deceased by NSAG attacks with cash ₦600,000 per family in Gwoza LGA. Nevertheless, most of the displaced population in need has been left without any form of aid or support in response to the numerous crises that have put their safety and well-being at risk, particularly in the locations where livelihood support is scarce and searching for firewood and farming is the only means of subsistence. Many families rely on venturing into the bush daily to gather firewood, both for their own household needs and to sell for income to support their families. Without adequate support, these communities are trapped in a cycle of vulnerability, forced to endure risks to their safety and well-being

simply to meet their family's basic needs. This underscores the urgent need for intervention and assistance to ensure the dignity and security of these individuals and families.

Other needs based on vulnerabilities include:

- Limited services for GBV survivors (especially when it comes to sexual and physical assault), GBV survivors require support such as case management services, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and specialized Psycho-Social Support (PSS).
- Limited Child Protection partners and increased level of child labor (out-of-school children, street begging, street hawking), and early or forced marriage leading to further vulnerabilities of minors.
- Limited presence of actors that can deliver responses to psychological and emotional trauma, especially to female-headed households, adolescent risks, and elderly persons who are at further risk from NSAG attacks.
- Lack of access to safe livelihood and basic services (food, NFI, shelter), which is increasing the vulnerability and exposure of the population to various protection risks and constrains them to go to the farm.
- Limited efforts to ensure that national humanitarian actors or communities are empowered to address the arising needs of the vulnerable population as a result of the lack of continued humanitarian interventions in areas of relocation and the lack of continued support from the government after IDPs are returned/relocated.

PRIORITY IDENTIFIED NEEDS/RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Borno State Government

- To ensure the safety and security of IDPs and returnees in the areas they are residing particularly in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasak), and Ngala LGAs.
- Given the insecurity in surrounding towns of the LGA capitals, there is a need to ensure an analysis of safety and freedom of movement before relocating civilians to areas with unsafe surroundings and a prone to attack by NSAGs. This remains important for a sustainable return as the returnees/relocated population is continuously facing intensified killing and abductions and will eventually relocate to safer locations.
- Ensure the IDPs and returnees' access to basic services and safe livelihood opportunities to reduce the protection risks of the displaced community including the intensified abductions and killings across different LGAs as well as to find permanent solutions.

To Donors

- Increase their support to Protection partners particularly Child Protection and GBV partners to reach a large number of IDPs and returnees in need of CP and GBV services including those particularly affected by recurrent NSAG abduction and killings.
- Support for the Protection Sector and partners to ensure the provision of targeted safe livelihood options to reduce the affected population's exposure to NSAG attacks, killing, and abductions.
- Reinforce HDP nexus linkages for a comprehensive response and sustainability of solutions and actual inclusion of all persons in SDG-related plans.

To Sectors and Protection Partners

- Advocacy and provision for safe livelihood opportunities and income-generating activities apart from farming and fetching firewood and local fruits in the bushes that exposed the population to Protection risks including killing and abductions. Most of the

affected population wants to get access to financial assistance to start a mini trading/business and support to engage in safe livelihood activities such as livestock, sewing machines, milling machines, and grinding machines among others to reduce their exposure to NSAG attacks as means of income generation activity to support their households.

- Advocacy to the Food Security sector for food assistance to the persons affected by the NSAG attacks as the reduction of food beneficiaries and lack of assistance is a pushing factor for the households to rely on firewood collection and farming in insecure areas to feed their families.
- Advocacy to Mine Action partners to organize additional EORE sessions and provide training for security personnel and community members on mine action, as the NSAGs could plant IEDs in farmlands or route to farmlands and have updated maps on locations that are at risk as claimed the lives of civilians recently.
- Provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Psycho-Social Support (PSS) to affected households using more mobile approaches in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs.
- Advocate for increased child protection and GBV concerns and mobilize additional partners to provide CP and GBV services in Bama, Damboa, Gwoza, Mobbar (Damasac), and Ngala LGAs.
- Sensitization and awareness-raising sessions on the effects of child labor and early/forced marriages, positive coping mechanisms, and effects of theft in the community as a mitigation measure.
- Provision of basic services including Shelter and NFI to reduce the vulnerability and exposure of the population to various protection risks.
- Advocacy to CMCOORD for engagement in bilateral dialogues with the military commanders in the LGAs affected to address the increased tension and the military role to reduce the civilian's exposure to NSAG attacks.