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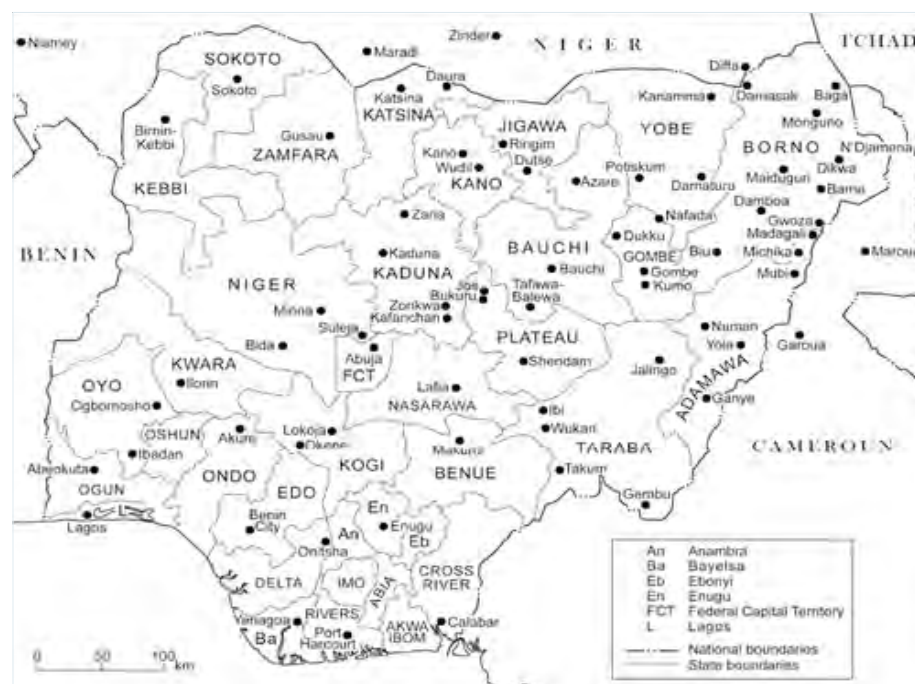
Violence and Displacement in Northern Nigeria

Identifying Environmental Factors in the Recent Eruption of Violence and the Associated Displacement Movements

Over the past few decades, scholars have been paying more and more attention to the role of environmental factors in conflicts, revealing that the environment should be carefully considered when analysing the root causes and consequences of wars. Some authors have even gone farther; Jared Diamond has for instance argued that environmental hazards and climate-related changes, among other factors, were responsible for the decline and collapse of entire societies. Recently, it has been shown that environmental changes played a significant part in the build-up of the ongoing conflict that has been devastating Syria for more than 4 years: following unprecedented drought from 2006 to 2010, rural populations dependent on agriculture saw a substantial deterioration in their living conditions. 1.5 million of them fled to cities (Pandey, 2015), which contributed to the destabilisation of the political order and fuelled tensions. The example of Syria is interesting to consider, since it also highlights the impact of migration movements on States.

Analysing the relationship between conflicts, migration and the environment will be a guiding principle of the following case study, which will not focus on Syria, but will rather examine the situation in northern Nigeria. Nigeria is a developing country that is now the largest economy on the African continent in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) (Caulderwood, 2014), with economic growth of more than 6% in 2014 (World Bank, 2015), and the largest producer of oil in Africa. Nigeria is a diverse country, with more than 250 ethnic groups and languages. The country gained independence in 1960, and after several decades of political instability, with numerous military coups, civilian rule was eventually established in 1999. Nigeria is a federal structure, with 36 states (See Annex 1), and around 800 Local Government Areas (LGAs) (IDMC, 2012).

In addition to the numerous economic, political and social challenges it has to cope with, Nigeria is facing environmental risks that are going to become more pervasive in the years and decades to come as a result of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the whole African continent will become increasingly exposed to the negative impacts of climate change (Ferris & Stark, 2012), notably including population movements. The United Nations Environment Programme has stated that by 2060, there will be around 50 million environmental migrants in Africa (Afifi, 2011). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines environmental migrants as people who choose or are obliged to leave their homes because of sudden or progressive modifications in the environment, which negatively impact the living conditions of those people being displaced within their country or abroad (IOM, 2014). The notion of environmental migrants and the projections made concerning the future number of environmental migrants are,

Figure 1: Nigeria and its 36 states

Source: Higazi & Brisset-Foucault, 2013

however, questioned. Indeed, migration movements cannot be understood solely through an environmental lens. The decision to migrate involves a wide range of factors, which can be environmental, as well as economic, social or political. It is thus important not to overestimate the significance of environmental issues when formulating projections of future migration movements.

At the same time, underestimating the impact of environmental factors on other processes may lead to misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Northern Nigeria has attracted considerable attention over the past few years because of the conflict opposing the national authorities and the Islamist movement Boko Haram. This conflict has led to considerable population displacements, which intensified in 2014. But the focus on Boko Haram has tended to hide other phenomena, especially environmental factors, which are also responsible for displacement in northern Nigeria. The following case study will examine the migration movements that occurred in 2014 in northern Nigeria, a year that witnessed a spectacular rise in the level of violence in the area. Its goal is to analyse the role of environmental parameters in conflict dynamics and the decision to migrate in order to uncover the influence of the environment on violence and displacement. For the purposes of the case study, northern Nigeria will be defined as the Muslim-majority area of Nigeria, consisting of the 12 states ruled by Sharia law, as well as the states of Plateau, Adamawa and Taraba (See Annex 2). The first section of the case study will show that northern Nigeria is a highly vulnerable zone because of poverty, underdevelopment and violence, as well as climate hazards and progressive environmental changes. The second part of the case study will focus on the year 2014, which saw large migration movements in northern Nigeria. The study will assess the humanitarian situation in the area and the policy responses implemented by the local, national and international authorities. The fourth section of the case study will analyze the 2014 migration movements in northern Nigeria using the environment – migration – conflict nexus, a very

interesting tool that helps to grasp the root causes and implications of the current events in northern Nigeria. The last section of the paper will identify several challenges that have to be addressed, and will propose a series of recommendations that could improve the situation in northern Nigeria.

1. NORTHERN NIGERIA, A ZONE EXPOSED TO A WIDE RANGE OF PROBLEMS

1.1. Poverty, underdevelopment and growing socioeconomic inequality

Despite the tremendous revenues brought by oil production, which is concentrated in the south of Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta, Nigerians' quality of life has not significantly improved over the past decades (Werz & Conley, 2012). Corruption is widespread and prevents the fair redistribution of wealth in the country. As a result, socioeconomic inequalities are growing between the south of Nigeria, which is relatively wealthy and predominantly Christian, and the north, highly disadvantaged with a majority of Muslims (Higazi & Brisset-Foucault, 2013). Today, Nigeria is one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of income and access to social and economic opportunities (UNDP, 2009). The north-south divide has led to underdevelopment of the northern states, where poverty rates are extremely high. Indeed, 75 to 90% of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day in the northwest and northeast of the country (BBC News, 2012). Illiteracy levels are as high as 85% in some parts of the north (MacCauley, 2014), and many children find themselves outside of the school system. In addition, unemployment rates are very high in northern Nigeria, especially among young people.

1.2. A situation of generalised violence

Since the democratic transition and the establishment of a civilian government in 1999, northern Nigeria has experienced more violence than the rest of the national territory (MacCauley, 2014). Recurrent conflicts have occurred in northern Nigeria for decades because of religious, ethnic and social tensions. Clashes between farmers and pastoralists have been consistently fuelling violence (Conroy, 2014). But since 2009, the emergence of Boko Haram has radically changed the conflict landscape of northern Nigeria. Boko Haram was created in northeastern Nigeria in the early 2000s, and was initially defined as a sect. Boko Haram is frontally opposed to Western civilisation, and to the secularisation of the Nigerian state. It also aims to establish an Islamic state (caliphate) in northern Nigeria (Adibe 2014). In 2009, it radicalised its actions (Adibe, 2014) and by 2011 had become a powerful insurgent organisation carrying out violent attacks against civilian populations (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). Boko Haram differs from other organisations insofar as it indiscriminately targets Christian and Muslim populations, whereas in the past, conflicts in northern Nigeria were based on ethnic and religious divides (Kimenyi & al, 2014). In its discourse, Boko Haram has publicly required Christians to leave northern Nigeria, while also attacking Muslim leaders who condemn the radical Islamists' tactics (IDMC, 2014).

Since the radicalisation of Boko Haram in 2009, attacks against civilians have been increasingly deadly. Between 2009 and 2011, the actions carried out by Boko Haram militants have led to the death of over 1,000 individuals in northern Nigeria (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2012). The conflict accelerated after the declaration of a state of emergency in 2012 in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa (IDMC, 2014), which form the northeastern part of Nigeria (See Annex 3). The state of emergency was later confirmed in May 2013, in the same three states (Kimenyi & al, 2014). Despite the arrival of armed governmental forces in the region, Boko Haram killed around 2,000 people in 2012 (Kimenyi & al, 2014). It then managed to take control

of some parts of Borno state in 2013 (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). In 2014, the conflict accelerated once again (See Annex 4), with Boko Haram multiplying large-scale abductions from the start of the year. The Islamist organisation proclaimed an Islamic caliphate in August 2014 in a territory including ten large cities in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states (IDMC, 2014). In the second half of the year, attacks multiplied, with Boko Haram believed to have killed more than 10,000 people in 2014, most of them massacred during raids carried out in the rural northeastern region (Alfred, 2015). This means that during 2014 alone, the Boko Haram killed more people than during the five previous years (IDMC, 2014). Violence is also now threatening to spill over into neighbouring countries such as Cameroon (Alfred, 2015).

Despite the rise of Boko Haram, other forms of violence have not disappeared. Clashes between herdsman and farmers also occurred in 2014, and in some cases, herdsman have been suspected of collaborating with Boko Haram, thus blurring the distinction between the new conflict, and the more traditional ethno-religious tensions (Kimenyi & al, 2014).

1.3. Growing environmental vulnerability

Northern Nigeria is exposed to several environmental challenges, which put a great amount of pressure on local ecosystems and on people's livelihoods.

1.3.1. Desertification

Desertification is likely to be the biggest environmental problem for northern Nigeria. Desertification has been defined by the United Nations as a process of land degradation in dry areas resulting from various factors, including human activities and climate variations (MacCauley, 2014). Desertification, which is sometimes called desert encroachment, has led to the disappearance of entire villages (Werz & Conley, 2012). It has a marked adverse effect on crop and livestock production, and is recognised as a driver of migration in northern Nigeria (IDMC, 2014). It is estimated that because of desertification, Nigeria is losing between 2,000 and 3,500 square kilometres of land each year (Mohammed, 2015, Werz & Conley, 2012). The Sahara desert currently already covers a third of the national territory, and is advancing at a rate of 0.6 kilometres per year (Conroy, 2014). Over the past two decades, sand dunes have expanded by 400% (Conroy, 2014), and have started to cover large portions of farmland in agriculturally productive regions (Mohammed, 2015). Desertification affects in particular the states of Sokoto, Yobe, Borno, and Kebbi (Ibimilua & Ibimilua, 2014). This century, two-thirds of the 11 following states could become desert areas: Sokoto, Yobe, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Gombe, Borno and Bauchi (Conroy, 2014).

1.3.2. Deforestation and decreasing yields

Northern Nigeria has experienced a continuous decrease in the percentage of forest areas, from 70% in the early 1960s to 35% today, while the surface area used for cropland and pasture has increased at the same time (MacCauley, 2014). The relationship between forests and agricultural fields is important: some studies have indeed revealed that the absence of vegetation cover was leading to a decrease in soil nutrients in the Sahel region, which was in turn threatening soil productivity. Insufficient levels of soil nutrients pose a serious risk to crop productivity, comparable to decreasing rainfall levels (MacCauley, 2014). In northern Nigeria the soil has traditionally been suitable for the cultivation of numerous crops, such as sorghum, rice, corn, millet, cowpeas and soybeans. But with less and less iron in the soil, crop production will be affected. In the Sahel region of Nigeria, crop yields have reduced on average by 20% over the past three decades (Conroy, 2014).

1.3.3. Degrading weather conditions

The north of Nigeria is a semi arid zone consisting mostly of savannah, with low rainfall levels (Mohammed, 2015). Since the start of the 19th century, the Sahel region of Nigeria has witnessed a 3 to 4% drop in rainfall per decade (Conroy, 2014). Some studies have reported that the rain episodes in West Africa were sensitive to deforestation (MacCauley, 2014). Following that analysis, the decline in rainfall levels is likely to be related to the decrease in forest surface in northern Nigeria. The steady decline in annual rainfall has been accompanied by a shortening of the rainy season, which lasted 5 months 30 years ago, and lasts only 4 months nowadays (Conroy, 2014). The distinction between the dry and the rainy season is becoming more and more blurred, thereby destabilising agricultural cycles (Werz & Conley, 2012). Moreover, northern Nigeria is a drought-prone territory where water is scarce in many areas (Werz & Conley, 2012). Droughts are more frequent in the states of Kebbi, Kastina, Sokoto, Jigawa, Kano, Borno and Yobe (Ibimilua & Ibimilua, 2014). Throughout the whole Sahel region, overall temperatures have been on the rise over the past decades (See Annex 5) (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

1.3.4. Exposure to floods

While desertification, deforestation, decreasing yields and degrading weather conditions can be labelled as slow-onset events, floods can be qualified as sudden disasters. In Nigeria at least 20% of the population is at risk from flooding (Etuonovbe, 2011), and floods occur frequently. Flood episodes result in the destruction of roads, bridges, farmlands and infrastructure (Etuonovbe, 2011), and also provoke large-scale population displacements. In 2009, floods displaced around 140,000 Nigerians, and at least 500,000 in 2011 (IDMC, 2012). In northern Nigeria more specifically, floods have been more frequent and more intense (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). In September 2010, heavy rainfall pushed local authorities to open the Challawa and Tiga dams in the state of Kano, in order to relieve the water pressure put on them. The subsequent flooding displaced two million people (Ferris & Stark, 2012). In the state of Sokoto in the same month, a massive flood submerged around 50 villages, and forced over 130,000 Nigerians to flee (Etuonovbe, 2011). In 2014, flooding was limited in northern Nigeria, only affecting southern states (IDMC, 2014).

Northern Nigeria is a region characterised by endemic poverty and underdevelopment. Furthermore, the gap between the north and the south of the country is widening. Violence is widespread in northern Nigeria, in particular because of the conflict between governmental authorities and the insurgent group Boko Haram. In addition, the region is becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate change and environmental hazards. In 2014, the explosion of violence in northern Nigeria, associated with underlying economic, political and environmental problems, led to massive population movements.

2. 2014: A SPECTACULAR RISE IN VIOLENCE CAUSING LARGE MIGRATION MOVEMENTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

This section does not aim at studying seasonal migration movements, which are traditional adaptation strategies, very common in West Africa. The following section will neither focus on the traditional conflicts fueled by religious, ethnic or regional divisions and tensions, which have regularly caused displacement movements across Nigeria (IDMC, 2012). Rather, the purpose of the following analysis is to assess the exceptional migrations that occurred in 2014 in Northern Nigeria.

Figure 2. The 12 states ruled by Sharia law in Nigeria

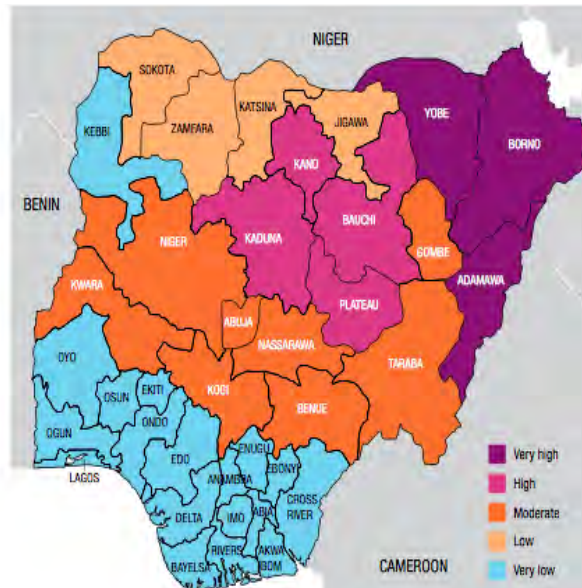
Source: Bowie, Nile. 2012 "Nigeria: Fertile Ground for Balkanization". Infowars.com

2.1. The difficulty of obtaining reliable and accurate information on displacement

At the local and national levels, there is little capacity to collect data on displacement movements within Nigeria (IDMC, 2012). Functioning monitoring institutions are lacking in Nigeria, and no accurate figures are released regarding levels of displacement in the country (IDMC, 2012). From state to state, the expertise in data collection regarding internally displaced persons (IDPs) varies greatly (IDMC, 2014). Independent estimates provided by international organisations are generally lacking (IDMC, 2014). When data is collected, the quality of information is limited, because data on displacement is only occasionally disaggregated by sex, age or location (IDMC, 2014). Quite often, the numbers provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies are rough estimates, which only take into account people living in temporary camps and shelters, or refer to very localised displacements without looking at the big picture (Ferris & Stark, 2012). The Nigerian Red Cross Society, for example, collects information through volunteers and its local branches, but is not able to maintain a national and centralised database (IDMC, 2014).

Only considering the people who are living in camps after being displaced is problematic in northern Nigeria, because most migrants are hosted by friends or family (Ferris & Stark, 2012). Even though they constitute the vast majority of IDPs, individuals living in host communities (with relatives) are not counted, and there is almost no available data concerning them (IDMC, 2014). In addition, the methodology

Annex 3: Intensity of the conflict against Boko Haram across Nigeria



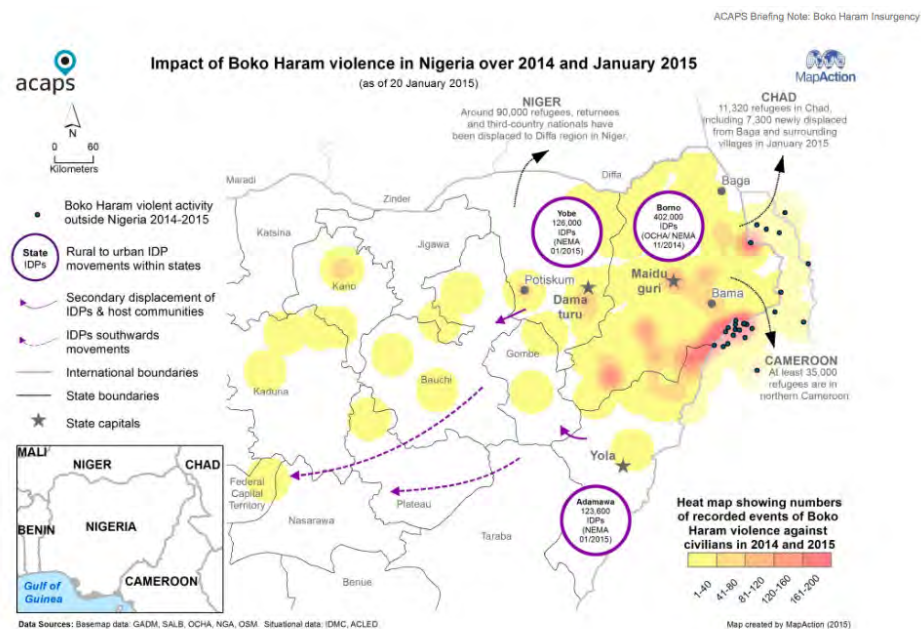
Source: Kimenyi & al, 2014

of estimates can be criticised, given that the estimates provided by governmental agencies are sometimes obtained by simply looking at the number of damaged or destroyed homes in areas from where people have escaped (IDMC, 2014). Moreover, estimates rarely collect information on return movements, when migrants come back to their homes (IDMC, 2014). In the absence of comprehensive and consistent data, key patterns of displacement cannot be identified and understood (IDMC, 2012). As a result, the right policy responses cannot be designed and implemented (IDMC, 2014).

2.2. Quantifying the number of IDPs in Northern Nigeria in 2014

Despite all of the aforementioned limitations, there is some available information circulating on how many Nigerians were displaced in the northern part of the country in 2014. Data has to be carefully considered, and cannot be entirely trusted. However, numbers are useful to give an order of magnitude of what happened in the north of Nigeria in 2014. The number of Nigerians who had to flee is considerable: the National Emergency Agency of Nigeria (NEMA), which is the state agency in charge of disaster management in Nigeria, estimates that 250,000 people had to flee their homes during the first three months of 2014 in the northeast of the country. The number of people being displaced seems to have steadily increased in 2014. During the first nine months of the year, NEMA reported around 1.5 million IDPs in the three northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). Christos Stylianides, who is charge of humanitarian aid and crisis management at the European Commission, said in December 2014 that 1.6 million Nigerians had been displaced because of the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram in 2014 (Alfred, 2015).

The migration crisis is not only internal, and has spilled over to neighbouring countries: Cameroon, Niger, and Chad (IOM, 2015). The Zinder and Diffa regions of Niger, the Lake Chad area, and the extreme North of Cameroon have faced a massive arrival of refugees and stranded migrants in 2014 (IOM, 2015). It is believed that between 90,000 and 160,000 fled to Niger in 2014 (Alfred, 2015, Assessment Capacities

Figure 4. Geographic impacts of Boko Haram attacks in 2014

Source: Assessment Capacities Project, 2015

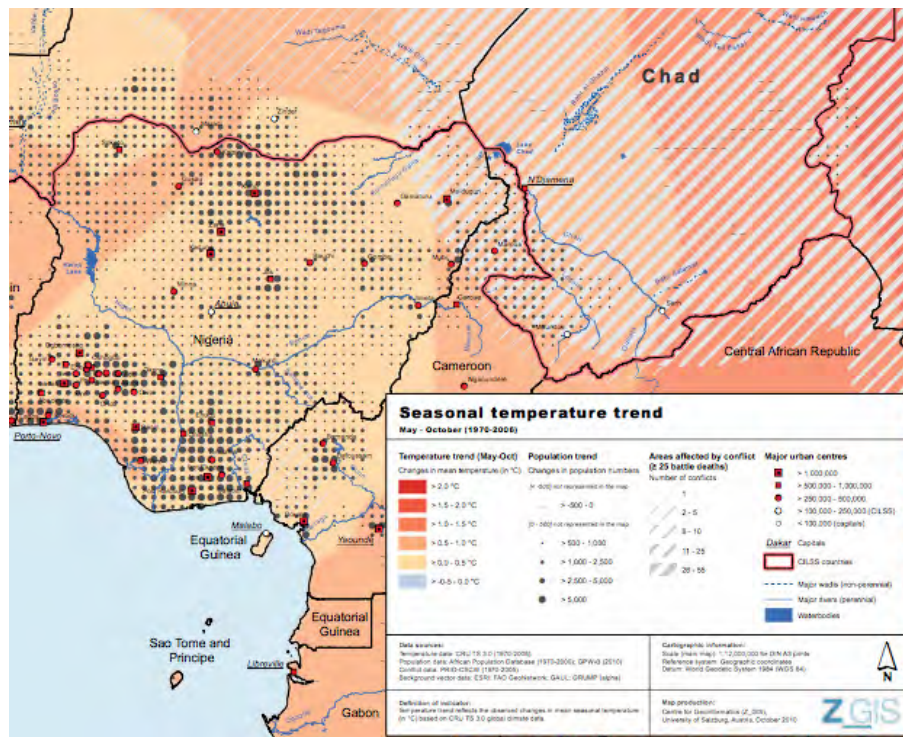
Project, 2015). At the same time, at least 10,000 people migrated to Chad, and at least 35,000 to Cameroon (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). As a result, at least 135,000 Nigerians sought asylum in neighbouring countries. And this trend seems to have continued, with more than 10,000 migrants arriving in Western Chad from Nigeria during the first two weeks of January 2015 (Alfred, 2015).

Faced with huge information gaps and unreliable data, IOM has used a tool called the “Displacement Tracking Matrix”¹¹ (DTM) in northern Nigeria, in order to improve data collection. Originally implemented in six northern states, the DTM was then extended to the whole Nigerian territory at the end of 2014 (IOM, 2015). From July to December 2014, the DTM identified around 400,000 IDPs in five states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe (IOM, 2015). NEMA then used the DTM in Borno, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Zamfara, and discovered an additional 500,000 IDPs (IOM, 2015). As a result, and following the IOM methodology, there were around 900,000 IDPs in Nigeria at the end of 2014 (See Annex 6). Yet once again, the scale of displacement movements is likely to have been largely underestimated. For instance, Monique Barbut, the current Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, has stated²² that in 2012 alone, migration movements in northern Nigeria accounted for around 7 million people, mostly migrating east towards the Lake Chad region. With that number in mind, it is likely that significantly more than 1 million, or even 1.5 million people were displaced in 2014, given the eruption of violence that rocked northern Nigeria.

1. Displacement Tracking Matrix – Tracking and Monitoring System for Displaced Populations <http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/DOE-Infosheet-DTM-v2-1.pdf>

2. Speech made during the “COP21, J-200: 200 décideurs d’aujourd’hui et de demain s’engagent” conference in Paris on May 4, 2015

Figure 5. Seasonal evolution of temperatures in the Sahel region, from 1970 to 2006



Source: United Nations Environment Programme, 2011

2.3. Assessing displacement patterns in Northern Nigeria

Even though data collection is difficult, which may prevent an in-depth analysis of the recent displacement patterns in northern Nigeria, a few trends can be discerned:

- The vast majority of migrants (probably more than 90%) sought refuge in host communities, with family, friends, or other relatives, rather than going to camps or other institutions (IOM, 2015). There are currently no official camps for displaced populations in Nigeria (Ferris & Stark, 2012)
- Many families split up, with men staying in dangerous areas, while women and children were being sent to safer regions in the south. Such a trend is not new, and has been observed during previous conflicts, for instance when religious clashes occurred in 2000 (IDMC, 2012).
- Migrants seemed to be moving from rural to urban areas (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015)
- IDPs migrated from the northeastern region to the states of Gombe, Taraba and Bauchi, and to central Nigeria (IDMC, 2014). But many IDPs stayed in the same area, and families simply fled throughout northeastern Nigeria (IDMC, 2014)
- Displacements directly induced by Boko Haram have tended to be of a longer duration than displacements induced by sudden climate hazards, which are generally temporary (IDMC, 2012)
- Migrants from Chad and Niger, who were seeking asylum in northern Nigeria, had to return to their country of origin (IDMC, 2012)
- Boko Haram's establishment of a caliphate has trapped populations in areas under the strict control of the radical Islamist organisation. Several reports have revealed that people seeking to flee the newly established caliphate were executed (IDMC, 2014)

- In the northwestern part of Nigeria, where Boko Haram is less active, state authorities recognised that thousands had been displaced because of desertification (IDMC, 2014)
- Displacement resulted from attacks carried out by Boko Haram, but also from the counterinsurgency action led by the Nigerian military (IDMC, 2012). Indeed, many civilians pre-emptively fled the areas likely to be disputed both by insurgents and by the military (IDMC, 2014)
- Since both Islamist militants and government soldiers are trying to control roads, many migrants chose to avoid those roads, and were forced into forests, where some of them lost their way, and suffered from hunger and thirst. Furthermore, in some cases, the military targeted migrants, taking them for Islamist insurgents on the move (IDMC, 2014)

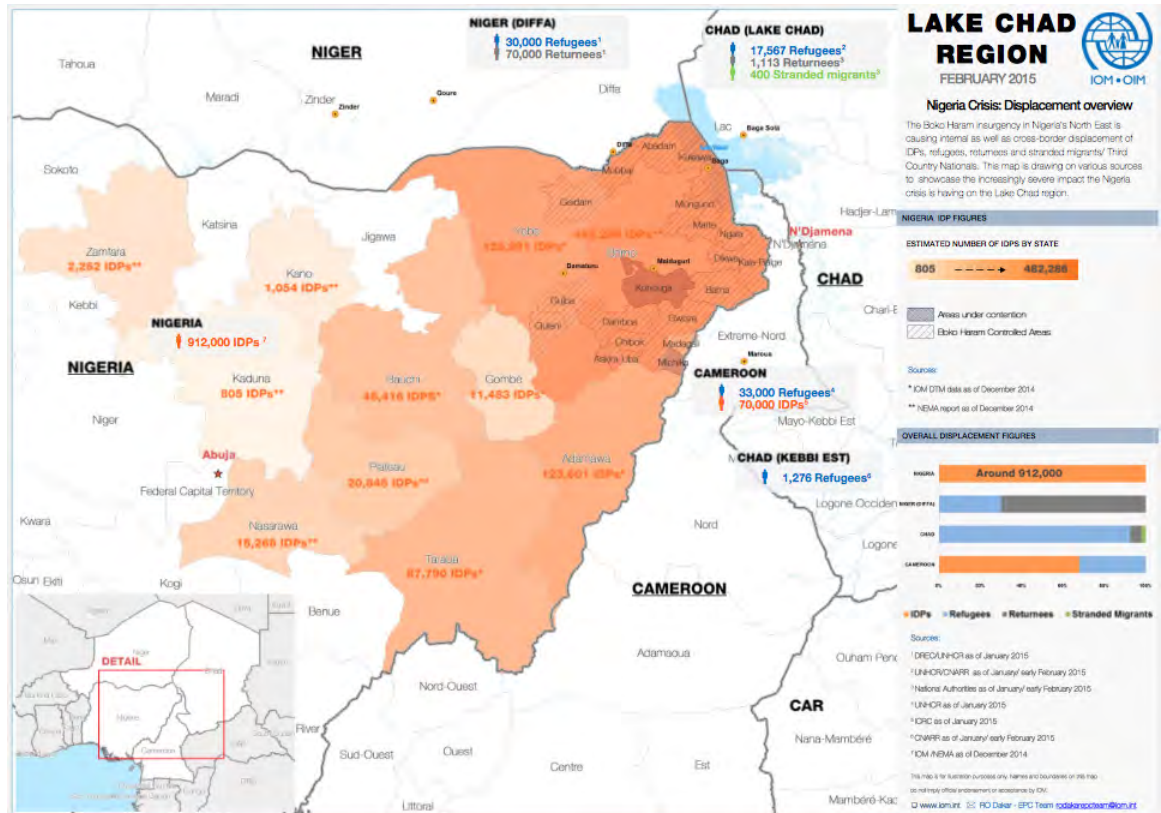
Despite the difficulty of obtaining accurate data on recent displacements in Nigeria, it appears that 2014 was marked by massive population movements in northern Nigeria and in the Lake Chad region. Migration patterns cannot be assessed in detail due to the lack of reliable information, however some key trends have been identified, in particular the importance of host communities, the rural-urban nature of movements, the existence of trapped populations, and the significant role played by the Nigerian counterinsurgency. Such massive population displacements have led to a situation of humanitarian emergency, with very limited policy responses.

3. INSUFFICIENT POLICY RESPONSES AND THE BUILD-UP OF A HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

3.1. Inability of national, local and international institutions to address the current migration crisis

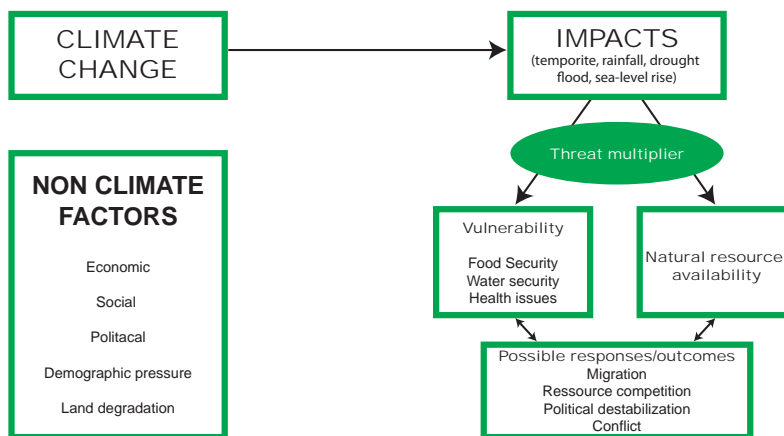
NEMA is the federal institution in charge of responding to the immediate needs of displaced groups (IDMC, 2012). It only started to work on a plan preparing for future displacements in June 2014, with the looming perspective of the 2015 presidential elections (IDMC, 2014). The initiative is laudable, yet it might have come too late regarding the current crisis. NEMA is usually assisted by the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), which oversees all refugee issues in Nigeria. In 2002, its mandate was expanded in order to include IDPs. The NCFR created a promising Plan of Action for resettlement and reintegration, which has still to be translated into concrete programmes and projects (IDMC, 2012). Nigeria ratified the Kampala Convention in 2012, which is the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (IDMC, 2014). Nevertheless, the federal government has yet to implement the Convention (IDMC, 2014). More generally, national responses to displacements tend to be uncoordinated and inadequate. Ministries, agencies, and departments involved in displacement policies tend to compete with each other for the same pools of money, which are moreover very limited (IDMC, 2014). At the state level, State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) are fulfilling the prerogatives that NEMA pursues at the federal level. The SEMAs have varying capabilities, and responses to displacement differ significantly from state to state, with an absence of coordination (IDMC, 2012). International NGOs are not really present in the field, given the risks in the region, and the difficulty of ensuring access to IDPs (IDMC, 2014). Lastly, foreign donors have been reluctant to contribute to the financing effort of migration policies, given the size and growth of the phenomenon but also the corruption characterising Nigeria. As a result, foreign financial contributions targeting the displacement crisis remain low (IDMC, 2014).

Figure 6. Displacement crisis in Northeastern Nigeria according to the IOM methodology



Source: International Organization for Migration, 2015

Figure 7. Conceptual framework describing the environment-migration-conflict nexus



Source: United Nations Environment Programme, 2011

3.2. Underlying problems hampering the efficiency of migration policies

Local, national and international responses to migration movements within Nigeria have generally proved insufficient and inadequate for several reasons. Assistance has tended to be based on short-term perspectives, and has not targeted the medium to long-term reconstruction of livelihoods among impacted populations, which is nevertheless a necessary step to consider (IDMC, 2012). Both the international community and the Nigerian authorities have focused almost exclusively on northeastern Nigeria, with an emphasis on emergency response. Such a short-term approach has prevented a precise understanding of the root causes of displacement, which is a necessary step in order to design and implement durable solutions for IDPs (IDMC, 2014). In addition, the Nigerian government has focused its responses on disaster management mechanisms, which do not address all aspects of the issue of recent displacements in northern Nigeria. Many tools implemented by the government target migrants living in camps, but that response is inadequate, given that the vast majority of IDPs live in host communities (IDMC, 2012). Migration policies are also affected by the militarisation of the crisis, given that government counterinsurgency operations have led to further instability and displacement in the northeastern part of Nigeria (IDMC, 2014). General government policies have reinforced the vulnerability of migrants and aggravated tensions, especially with the principle of “indigenisation”, which discriminates against those unable to prove their ties to the original populations of a given area. Those “non-indigenes”, who are likely to be migrants, are excluded from already limited resources, such as land, education, public sector jobs, and participation in political affairs (IDMC, 2014).

3.3. A situation of humanitarian emergency that is worsening

The northeastern region of Nigeria, which hosts the largest number of IDPs, is in desperate need of additional support given the dire humanitarian situation. NEMA has recently stated that 3 million Nigerians are affected by serious humanitarian problems (MacGroarty & Akingbule, 2014). These problems are multidimensional, with several overlapping crises:

- Food crisis: food security is a crucial concern for migrants. Given that federal and state authorities have restricted access to roads and have implemented many security measures, rural transport and markets have been disrupted, which has exacerbated food insecurity (IDMC, 2014). In some areas of northern Nigeria, there has been no harvest and no planting for the past 3 years (Alfred, 2015). Cases of malnutrition have increased in zones affected by displacement (IDMC, 2014). Without substantial humanitarian support, it is believed that up to 3 million people will have to cope with food insecurity in Nigeria in July 2015 (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015)
- Disease outbreaks: diseases have proliferated in areas where IDPs are concentrated. Cholera cases among migrants and host populations in northeastern Nigeria reached 26,000 cases and led to more than 400 deaths between January and July 2014, which can be compared to less than 200 cases over the same period of time the previous year (IDMC, 2014). In addition, most healthcare facilities located in the northeastern region were closed in mid-2014, because of the ongoing conflict (IDMC, 2014)
- Education crisis: displaced children are often unable to pursue their education, especially since many schools throughout the north of Nigeria are used as shelters for IDPs, and also because schools are a favoured target for Boko Haram. Many schools have been shut down (around 100 schools in Taraba state, for example), and those schools that remain open are quite empty, since many children do not go to school any more, for fear of attacks and abductions (IDMC, 2014)
- Housing crisis: displaced populations often stay with family, friends, or people they pay. But some IDPs seek shelter in camp-like places such as stadiums, schools,

- mosques, churches and university campuses. Makeshift camps are quickly overcrowded and become inadequate. In some extreme cases, migrants with no access to safe shelter have to take refuge outside, in the bush (IDMC, 2014). In other situations, Nigerian soldiers have expelled migrants from public buildings and used the facilities for military purposes (IDMC, 2014). At the same time, the homes of displaced populations are at risk of being damaged, occupied by other people, or destroyed (IDMC, 2014)
- Safety issues: displaced populations mostly consist of women and children, who are the most vulnerable groups. Their physical safety is endangered on a daily basis, with risks of various types of violence, including sexual violence. A significant number of women, and even girls, have been forced to resort to prostitution to meet their basic needs (IDMC, 2014)
 - Assistance crisis: given that the majority of migrants are hosted by relatives, those migrants do not receive humanitarian assistance. Therefore, their resources and those of the host communities have to be shared, which makes both the IDPs and their hosts more vulnerable (IDMC, 2012). Migrants are highly exposed to further shocks. They often have to sell their belongings, reduce their food intake, and accumulate debts in order to survive (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). They cannot rely on their past livelihoods, because migration implies a loss of farmland, livestock and tools (IDMC, 2014). As a result, IDPs and their host communities are sometimes forced into further displacement, because of sustained violence and a lack of basic resources. Community resources tend to deplete over time, and coping strategies are adversely impacted with each displacement cycle (IDMC, 2014).

The current humanitarian crisis in northern Nigeria is multidimensional and extremely serious. Local, national, and international institutions have thus far been unable to resolve the problems faced by IDPs, and have established ineffective policies that do not target the root causes of the crisis. In order to better understand how and why violence erupted in 2014, followed by associated migration movements, it is necessary to examine the crucial but underestimated impact of environmental factors in this complex process.

4. EXPLAINING THE 2014 CRISIS USING THE ENVIRONMENT-MIGRATION-CONFLICT NEXUS

The environment-migration-conflict nexus is highly relevant in order to analyze the contemporary dynamics characterising West Africa (Werz & Conley, 2012). Climate change, migration and security are three issues that intersect in northern Nigeria, and the next section will reveal how the recent migration movements have to be considered in light of the links between these three phenomena.

4.1. A theoretical approach that has garnered attention

The root causes of population displacement are complex, multi-faceted, and often overlapping (IDMC, 2014). Researchers have been working on the connection between migration, conflict and climate change for years (Conroy, 2014), and there is growing evidence that these three phenomena are interrelated (Werz & Conley, 2012). Climate change and environmental factors have been increasingly taken into account when analysing wars and population displacement. It is now widely recognised that environmental factors play a significant role in conflicts and migration, along with social, cultural, economic and political parameters (Conroy, 2014). Of course, climate change and environmental factors do not act as a single and isolated cause of conflicts and migration movements, and causal relationships cannot be highlighted with certainty between these three processes (United Nations Environment

Programme, 2011). However, the connections between these issues suggest that the approach of analysing and addressing them as separate topics is no longer relevant (Werz & Conley, 2012). Furthermore, climate change, conflict and migration are embedded in a web of factors with environmental, economic, social and political dimensions (See Annex 7). In 2015, the importance of climate change impacts on other domains goes well beyond the academic sphere. The U.S. administration itself has called climate change a “threat multiplier” (USDOD, 2014) with broad impacts on security and global affairs. In 2010, the Nigerian government labelled climate change as the “greatest environmental and humanitarian challenge facing the country” for the 21st century (Werz & Conley, 2012).

4.2. An agricultural sector at risk of collapse

Nigeria’s agricultural sector is concentrated in the north of the country, and accounts for a significant share of national GDP, estimated between 20 and 40% (Caulderwood, 2014, Werz & Conley, 2012). At the national level, agriculture employs around 70% of the workforce (Kimenyi & al, 2014). In northern Nigeria, the figure rises to 80% (MacCauley, 2014). The vast majority of this area consists of rural communities involved in pastoral farming, crop production and nomadic pastoralism, who are thus highly dependent on the use of the land (MacCauley, 2014). Today, Nigeria’s agriculture is seriously endangered by a combination of factors: firstly, climate change and environmental hazards such as desertification, soil degradation and low rainfall have a direct impact on natural resources, and threaten the livelihoods of all Nigerians using those resources in the agricultural sector. It appears that climate change intensifies the risks posed by environmental hazards, which gives rise to major employment and food security concerns (Mohammed, 2015). Climate change does not have a uniform impact on local populations, and tends to have a more pronounced influence on groups who are already highly dependent on resources, and who are economically and socially marginalised (Conroy, 2014). Climate change does not only affect natural resources, but also threatens infrastructure, such as water supply (Conroy, 2014). Secondly, environmental risks facing the agricultural sector have been exacerbated by the negative impacts of Boko Haram’s activity in northern Nigeria (Alfred, 2015). The whole agricultural value chain is under the threat of attacks by insurgents (Caulderwood, 2014). As a result, many people have been pushed outside of the conflict zone, therefore reducing agricultural labour availability (Kimenyi & al, 2014); it is harder to find people ready to work in the fields due to the fear of attacks, leading to improperly timed harvesting (Kimenyi & al, 2014). Insurgents have destroyed the production of some farmers, attacked livestock markets, and seized food supplies and livestock (Alfred, 2015). Widespread insecurity has led to the shutting of many farms and markets. Suppliers of pharmaceuticals for animals have closed their operations in the northeast (Kimenyi & al, 2014), and transportation costs have also significantly increased.

As a result, the combination of environmental and security factors led to huge increases in food prices in 2014 (Caulderwood, 2014). When comparing current price levels to the levels at the end of the 2000s (just before Boko Haram started to carry out large scale attacks on civilians), a 45 to 130% difference can be observed (Kimenyi & al, 2014). Yields have also suffered, and in 2014, many areas were undercultivated or not harvested at all (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). Poverty and unemployment have risen, which is quite worrying, given that those two factors have been associated with higher recruitment opportunities for radical movements such as Boko Haram (Higazi & Brisset-Foucault, 2013). In addition, demographic factors reinforce the pressure on both the agricultural sector and the environment. The median age in the country is only 19, and Nigeria’s population will probably double by 2040 (Werz & Conley, 2012). Food security is thus gravely threatened, with a population growing at a rate of 3% per year, while food production has so far increased at a rate around 1.5% (Mohammed, 2015).

4.3. Rising migratory pressure: the role of environmental factors

In 2014, the eruption of violence in northern Nigeria caused massive population displacement. Displacement appears to be a result of widespread insecurity, yet the environmental dimension of the phenomenon must be taken into account. It is possible to argue that the conflict has precipitated migration movements, which were also triggered by environmental factors, and would have probably occurred even without the influence of Boko Haram's activities. In northern Nigeria, decisions to migrate are often linked to visible economic and social elements such as poverty and unemployment. However, when examining the root causes of migration, environmental factors are often present in the decision to migrate (Afifi, 2011). Environmental factors play a role in the decision to migrate, since environmental degradation threatens the livelihoods of people relying on natural resources in their everyday life, such as cattle herders and farmers, who form the majority of people living in northern Nigeria (Afifi, 2011). Desertification, deforestation, and unfavourable weather patterns lead to soil depletion, crop failure and the death of animals, which in turn cause impoverishment and then displacement (Ibimilua & Ibimilua, 2014). In northeastern Nigeria, herdsmen have been forced to move further south in order to graze their cattle (Conroy, 2014). Many poor farmers and pastoralists respond to diminishing land fertility by moving to another piece of land for grazing and cultivation, and by expanding the surface of land they use (MacCauley, 2014). Many herders and farmers have also been driven into cities (Werz & Conley, 2012). This urbanisation process is highly challenging, because peri-urban areas tend to expand into traditional agricultural zones, with the process of urban sprawling (Conroy, 2014). The arrival of people in cities puts more pressure on urban centres, and especially on the social services that the authorities are supposed to provide (Conroy, 2014). Farmers are crucial for Nigeria's stability, thus the migration of farmers poses a significant risk for the national food supply (MacGroarty & Akingbule, 2014). NEMA underlined in 2012 that the displacements of thousands of farmers could lead to a massive food crisis (IDMC, 2012). Of course, migration is only one response for people whose living conditions are threatened by climate change, and environmental dimensions are unlikely to constitute the only "push factor" that encourages the decision to migrate (Conroy, 2014). However, environmental issues represent a key factor in that decision.

4.4. Growing tensions over increasingly scarce resources

The connection between environmental issues, migration and conflict is deeply related to a process of increased competition over resources (Conroy, 2014). As has been underlined above, climate change and natural hazards reinforce existing vulnerabilities, lead to greater water and food insecurity, and modify the availability of natural resources. These impacts increase migratory pressure, but they also give rise to greater competition for resources, growing tensions, and levels of conflict (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). It has been shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa, a proportional modification of 5% in rainfall compared to the previous year increased the likelihood of conflict the following year by 50% (Kimenyi & al, 2014). Climate change and environmental risks intensify resource scarcity for everyone, and deplete natural capital (Conroy, 2014). In northern Nigeria, more and more people are seeking access to land and natural resources (Olufemi & Samson, 2012). In that perspective, it is especially relevant to focus on the pastoralist-farmer tensions in northern Nigeria: herders migrate to the south, and some of them are even adopting a sedentary lifestyle, resulting in competition between herders and local farmers for local resources and farmlands, which result in violent conflicts (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). Because of changing weather patterns, cattle are now migrating not only during the dry season, but also throughout the whole year. Farmers accuse herdsmen of trampling recently planted seeds, preventing them from germinating,

causing significant losses (Conroy, 2014). At the same time, pastoralists lack access to grazing lands, especially because farms are getting bigger and grazing routes are not protected (Conroy, 2014). As a result, land degradation and land expansion are leading to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in northern Nigeria, who are fighting for the same pool of resources: pasture, land, livestock routes, crop-residue, and water points (MacCauley, 2014). Fair resource management is more and more difficult, and land use is becoming a highly disputed space.

Migration driven by environmental and security issues is exacerbating tensions in northern Nigeria (Werz & Conley, 2012). Large-scale movements of people fuelled by resource scarcity, population growth, and socioeconomic inequalities are likely to increase the risk of violence in host communities and in cities (Conroy, 2014). Increased displacement movements have been recognised as triggers for ethno-religious violence among communities (Werz & Conley, 2012). And it is extremely interesting to highlight that some of those communities are proving susceptible to the arguments put forward by Boko Haram (Werz & Conley, 2012). This is an important point, as it shows that in northern Nigeria conflicts are often misrepresented as religious or ethnic clashes, whereas their root causes are related to struggles over the control of land and to the tensions created by population displacement (Conroy, 2014). When addressing the issue of the 2014 migration movements in northern Nigeria, land is a parameter that cannot be underestimated.

Using the environment-migration-conflict nexus to analyse the 2014 migration movements in northern Nigeria is very instructive, since it reveals certain key elements that would not otherwise be obvious, especially regarding the role played by environmental factors. Climate change and natural risks have a visible and direct impact on the agricultural sector and on the livelihoods of the majority of the population. However, their influence on stability and security is more distant, even though it exists (Conroy, 2014). In northern Nigeria, environmental issues exacerbate violence and cause migration movements, underlining the fact that natural factors have massive consequences in terms of security, and have to be taken into account when addressing violence and migration in northern Nigeria in 2014.

5. IMPROVING THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

The number of migrants in northern Nigeria continued to increase in 2015 (IOM, 2015). In the same year it was also estimated that 9 million people were affected by violence, with 3 million in urgent need of humanitarian assistance (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). The adverse effects of climate change became more pronounced, and environmental degradation worsened. At the same time, Boko Haram does not seem to be collapsing, and continues to carry out deadly attacks in the region. With an increasing population, massive urbanisation, growing climate change impacts, and the persistence of violence and migration, the Nigerian government will be called upon to provide more social services, despite its limited capabilities (Werz & Conley, 2012). As a result, improving the humanitarian situation in northern Nigeria represents a daunting task for the Nigerian authorities. In this perspective, a few suggestions could be considered:

- Given the gravity of the humanitarian crisis, basic services have to be provided in northern Nigeria as soon as possible: food, water, healthcare, and education. Education is necessary, especially given that children and young adults who are not educated are more likely to be recruited by violent groups (Assessment Capacities Project, 2015). Education is also key in terms of raising awareness about environmental issues (Afifi, 2011)

- Displacement has to be addressed in a more holistic manner, which targets among other aspects host communities (IOM, 2015). Supporting host communities could be especially helpful in preventing further displacement, and reducing the possibility of conflict between migrants and host populations. Improved data collection is crucial in order to better understand displacement patterns and to design appropriate policy responses (IOM, 2015). More durable approaches that do not solely focus on the short term are necessary in order to promote the sustainable reintegration of displaced groups. Moreover, more dialogue has to take place with neighbouring countries at the regional level, given that displacement movements in northern Nigeria cross national borders (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). Lastly, the potential positive role of migration must be recognised, especially as a climate change adaptation strategy.
- The socioeconomic development of the north should become an absolute priority for the newly elected Nigerian government. Alleviating poverty, providing jobs, and building infrastructure is essential. There is a sizeable opportunity for the government in northern Nigeria to implement green growth programmes (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). Green growth implies a comprehensive framework, where economic growth, the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities, human well-being, and the protection of the environment are reconciled. In this perspective, climate change adaptation can be used as a programme to favour socioeconomic development
- Climate change adaptation should not only be a policy priority, but should also be translated into concrete programmes and projects. Disaster risk reduction programmes must be implemented, given the extent to which disaster preparedness is lacking in Nigeria (Werz & Conley, 2012). The Nigerian Ministry of Environment has, for example, promoted the Great Green Wall project, an initiative proposed by the African Union, aiming to limit desertification through the planting of 1,500 kilometres of vegetation in the Sahel region (Conroy, 2014). The project seems promising, however only a fraction of the funds pledged have been delivered thus far (IDMC, 2014). Climate change adaptation strategies have to be conflict and migration-sensitive, which means that adaptation programs have to mitigate the drivers of conflict and migration (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011)
- Climate change adaptation, migration policies, and conflict management programmes require increased funding. At the national level, better redistribution of oil revenues is necessary, with a reduction of corruption in order to free up additional funding. At the international level, Nigeria could appeal to financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, which is supposed to be endowed with \$100 billion per year starting in 2020, in order to finance climate change adaptation in developing countries, among other elements.

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