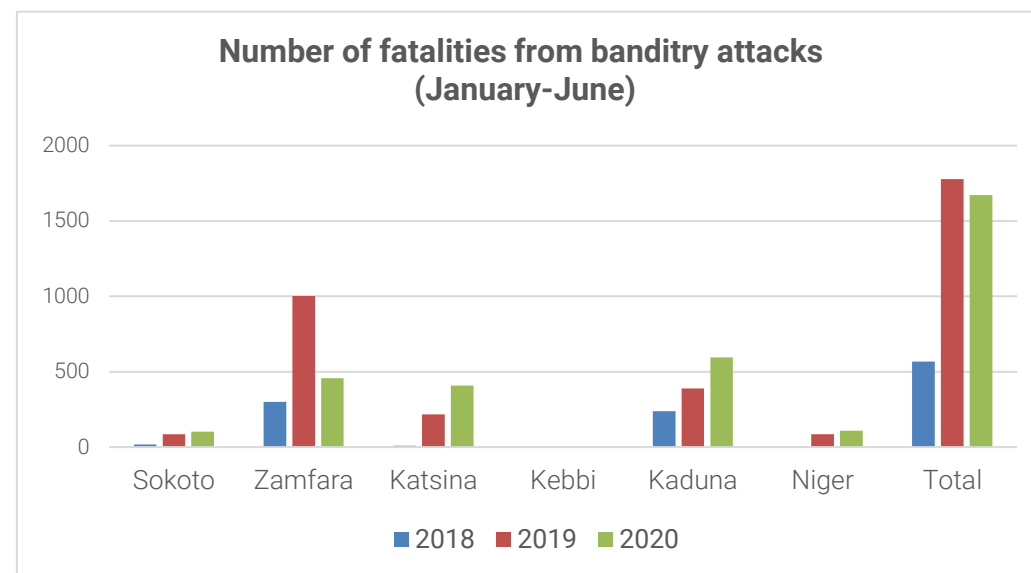


Situation Overview

A new humanitarian crisis is emerging in Nigeria’s northwest with the ongoing activities of armed groups referred to locally as ‘bandits’ in six states, namely Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger and Kebbi. Attacks have included shooting and killing, cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, torching of entire villages, and looting of valuables, and the numbers of fatalities and displaced people have continued to rise. While more than 1,100 people were killed in 2018 in the six states, over 2,200 were killed in 2019, and more than 1,600 fatalities were recorded between January – June 2020 (Council on Foreign Relations 07/2020). By September 2019, such attacks had internally displaced over 160,000 people and produced more than 41,000 refugees (WFP 09/2019; UNHCR 09/2019). Displacement numbers now stand at over 247,000 IDPs and some 60,000 refugees (UNHCR 05/2020; UNHCR 26/06/2020).

Besides heightened protection concerns, needs include WASH, livelihoods, and healthcare. Women and children continue to be the most vulnerable groups, with many women widowed and thrust into non-traditional positions of breadwinners and family heads. This change in social status is impacting social roles as women are traditionally in purdah (indoor seclusion), and not responsible for family income generation. Some children have also been orphaned and arrive unaccompanied to displacement camps (UmmuAmeena Alyateem Foundation 29/06/2020).



Sources: Council on Foreign Relations 07/2020; Chart: ACAPS

Humanitarian constraints



- While there is an active presence of local aid agencies and INGOs in Nigeria’s northeast due to the Boko Haram insurgency, the landscape in the **northwest is not yet politically recognised as a humanitarian disaster**.
- Official protective and logistical infrastructure are yet to be made for major donor agencies to operate fully and functionally in the area. **Humanitarian presence is very low**.
- Activities of armed groups causing general insecurity also to **restrict humanitarian access to displaced people and people in need**.

Information Gaps/ Limitations

- This note is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data relied on a limited number of sources, at times reporting conflicting information.
- Primary data, especially when contradictory, was corroborated and backed by secondary data. Secondary data was not always up to date, which means that some unclarities remain around the current banditry dynamics.
- There is still lack of clarity around the needs and locations of IDPs in the six states and our information came from few available, yet reliable sources.

Crisis Impact

Displacement

More than 309,000 people have been displaced by the northwest banditry crisis as of 30 June. Zamfara state accommodates about 69,000 IDPs, Kaduna 71,000, Katsina 61,000, Sokoto 45,000, and Niger 3,000 (UNHCR 05/2020). About 60,000 people displaced from Sokoto, Katsina and Zamfara have crossed the border to Maradi, in the Republic of Niger. More than 30,000 of the refugees arrived in Niger between May and June 2020 alone (UNHCR 26/06/2020). While Katsina and Niger states have formal IDP camps (Faskari, Dandle, Dandume, and Batsari for Katsina, and Gwada and Central School Camp for Niger), most IDPs informally organise themselves by seeking shelter in football fields, and primary and secondary school buildings (UmmuAmeena Alyateem Foundation 29/06/2020). Some of the IDP locations thus remain unknown or not recognised as such by local authorities. The public buildings used by IDPs as temporary shelters are insufficiently equipped, often lacking basic services and items such as safe water sources, toilets, sleeping tents, beddings, blankets, and cooking and washing utensils (UmmuAmeena Alyateem Foundation 29/06/2020). Many other IDPs are moving to urban centres to live within extended families and host communities, making it difficult to verify their exact locations, numbers or needs. Rapid displacement because of conflict also disrupts people's livelihood activities. As a coping mechanism, displaced people have taken to begging on the streets and engaging in menial jobs to survive. Fear and mistrust among IDPs have spread in camps as it is believed that informants and spies from banditry groups may have infiltrated IDP settlements, and are relaying vital security plans of the military to the bandits (HumAngle 28/06/2020).

Protection

Over 30.6 million people living in the six affected states face increased protection concerns due to the continued escalation of the crisis. Since 2016, almost daily attacks by bandits have been recorded in Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto prompting the Nigeria government to institute various security operations in the northwest. There are risks of getting kidnapped specifically for ransom (BBC 05/07/2020). Women and girls are susceptible to kidnap, sexual violence, and abuse, including rape. As banditry attacks have continued, the affected population has expressed a lack of trust towards the army and police and their ability to prevent these from happening. Residents and survivors in affected states have complained that response from the police and army were slow, and sometimes non-existent when they are attacked (Key Informant Interviews 27/06/2020). Affected communities started relying on local vigilantes for protection as a result. In certain cases, people arm themselves to resist attacks. Government's focus on fighting

Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast may also be hindering its response to insecurity in the northwest.

Livelihoods and Food Security

Large-scale farming and animal husbandry are the main economic activities in the northwest, with trading as an alternative source of income. Most farmers cultivate yams (in Niger state), legumes, beans, millet, tomatoes, and rice (in Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto). Targeted attacks on farmers throughout the year have made cultivation and harvest impossible. Bandits have warned farmers to stay away from their farms, and about 26 farmers who ignored this order were killed in Batsari LGA of Katsina state (BBC 07/07/2020). Farmers have been kidnapped for ransom, while bandits in Shiroro LGA have demanded payments of up to \$1,100 before farmers can access their farmlands (HumAngle 22/06/2020). Cattle rustling has also hampered animal husbandry in these areas. Violence and forced displacement had left affected communities unable to rely on own-produced cereals for subsistence and commercial farming, highlighting the risk of food insecurity for displaced and non-displaced populations. About 70% of the 309,000 IDPs in the northwest have insufficient food, with global acute malnutrition rates among children reported to be as high as 18% and 31% in Sokoto and Zamfara states respectively (WFP 09/2019).

WASH and Healthcare

Both formal and informal IDP camps need safe water sources, sanitary and hygiene items. About 65% of IDPs in Katsina and 53% of IDPs in Sokoto do not have access to safe drinking water (WFP 09/2019). Overcrowded latrine use, non-availability of toilet infrastructure and open defecation are also prevalent in the IDP camps as most were created for fewer numbers of people. All of these aggravate the risk of diarrhoea and cholera outbreaks in the camps. As water and hygiene infrastructure are insufficient for the numbers of IDPs, and with overcrowded camps, it is impossible to observe social distancing, enforce mask-wearing or guarantee washing of hands as required for the prevention of a COVID-19 spread. Most displaced people either do not believe that the virus exists or believe that banditry remains a bigger and closer threat to life. Across the six states 1,948 Covid-19 cases and 70 deaths are recorded as at 8 July (NCDC 08/07/2020).

Context

Banditry groups in six states of Nigeria's northwest have evolved in tactics and mode of operations for the past nine years, killing civilians at will, displacing population, and disrupting agricultural livelihoods of affected communities. Their activities began in form of herder-allied armed banditry but have transformed to resemble those of non-state armed groups (NSAG).

A surge in banditry attacks began in Nigeria in 2011 as a reflection of violent competition for scarce resources, mainly between farmers and herders in the northwest (The New Humanitarian 13/09/2018). Land and water became precious commodities especially due to environmental and ecological changes in the area, including desertification. Conflict over resources, including livestock, in certain cases, led to farmer/herder clashes and fighting between armed nomadic Fulani herders and armed sedentary Hausa/Non-Hausa farmers. The introduction of criminal enterprises on both sides soon turned some of them into banditry groups. Unresolved legal issues of land and grazing rights, limited security and administrative presence that failed to provide security in the area, and politicisation of the problem has further intensified the crisis and led to the emergence of fringe groups who now attack communities (ICG 18/05/2020; The New Humanitarian 13/09/2018)

Government response

Government's security response appears to have been inefficient. Varied joint security operations were instituted in the northwest but security in northwest Nigeria has deteriorated throughout the years. This was aggravated by the failure of an amnesty programme and peace deal inaugurated by the governors of Katsina and Zamfara states. Having granted amnesty to bandits with some of them partially surrendering their weapons on 6 December 2019, the violence was expected to reduce as negotiations continued (Legit 07/12/2020). However, the two most powerful banditry groups (Buharin Daji and Dogo Gyedi) and other groups did not participate in the peace pacts. (Salkida 16/10/2019). The peace deal, which appeared to grant more concessions to the Fulanis while overlooking the Hausa, also stirred up Hausa/Fulani ethnic conflagrations, and increased tensions between Hausa vigilantes and Fulani herders who are now all loosely been labelled as 'bandits and kidnapers' by some parts of the population. (Salkida 16/10/2019).

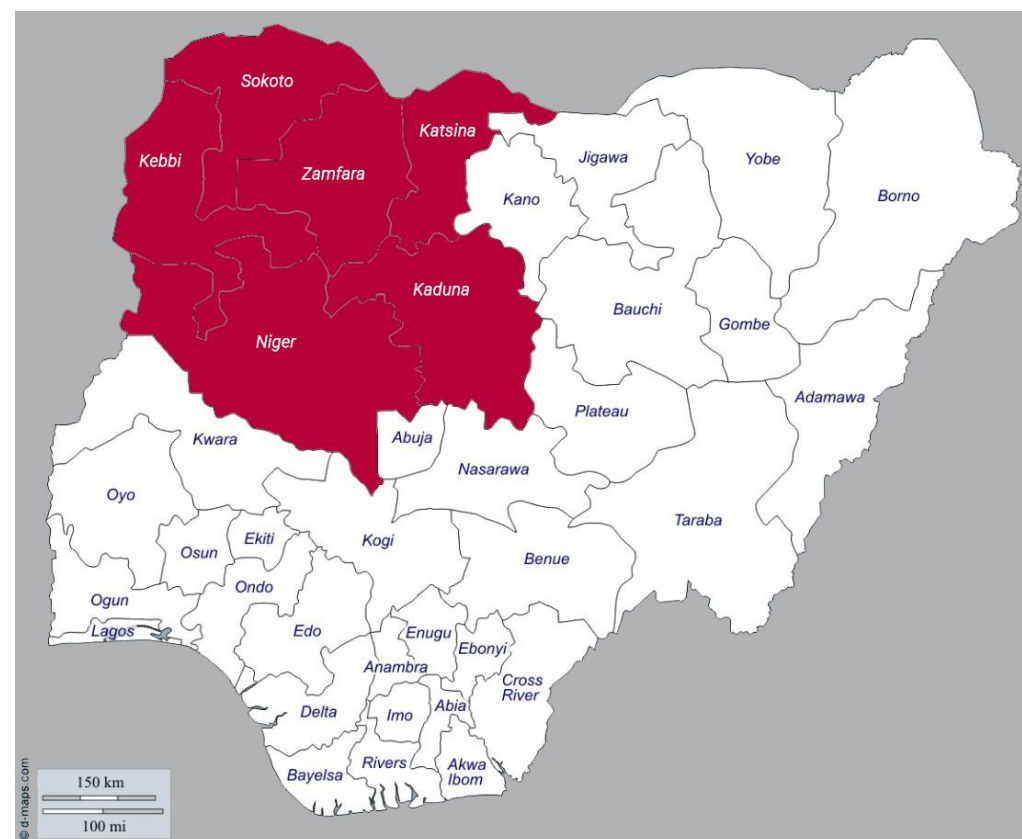
Gold mining and exploration

The discovery of gold reserves in parts of the affected areas (Zamfara and Kaduna) also posits that the control of these reserves may become contested between the government, illegal miners, and NSAGs, thereby increasing banditry violence and displacement of affected population. An estimated 80% of mining in the region is carried

out illegally on an artisanal basis while covert, unauthorised mining is also ongoing (Nestierspd 30/06/2020). The Government of Nigeria officially suspended mining activities in the northwest when it was suspected that banditry activities were a camouflage for illegal mining in unregulated sites (Daily Post 04/2019). This has not prevented the smuggling of gold to neighbouring countries nor stemmed the intensification of the crisis. Porous and proximate borders between Nigeria and Niger (Jibia in Katsina and Ilela in Sokoto) further aid in illegal movements of people and goods across both countries.

Connection with other NSAGs

The killing of 23 soldiers by bandits in Shimfida area of Jibia in Katsina state, and the death of five children from a bomb in Yammama village in the same state on 18 July seemingly lends credence to assertions that certain elements of the bandits are either linking up with other NSAGs in the northeast, or these NSAGs in the northeast are operating independently in the northwest (Al Jazeera 20/07/2020).



Map of Nigeria showing areas affected by Norwest Banditry Crisis – July 2020 (Sources: d-maps.com; ACAPS)