

THE WORLD'S MOST **NEGLECTED** DISPLACEMENT CRISES



Photo: Christian Jepsen/NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC

The world's most neglected displacement crises

Although humanitarian assistance should be based on needs, and needs alone, some crises receive much more attention and support, than others.

Every year, the Norwegian Refugee Council presents a list of the ten most neglected displacement crises. These crises are not just forgotten. We use the word “neglected” to highlight that the lack of attention towards these crises is the result of an intentional inaction, based on indifference or lack of prioritisation.

Our goal, in issuing this list, is to focus on the plight of people whose suffering seldom makes international headlines.

International donor countries are less keen to support these crises, because the countries are of little geopolitical interest, the affected people seem too far away and are difficult to identify with, or simply because the protracted nature of the crises has created donor fatigue. Most importantly, this is a list of crises where the lack of necessary political action or willingness to compromise have created a stalemate, and where there is limited hope for any imminent change to the situation.

Upon analysing 24 large displacement crises in 2017, we created this list based on the following three criteria:

- **Lack of political will:** This includes both the lack of political will among the armed parties on the ground to protect the rights of civilians and engage in peace

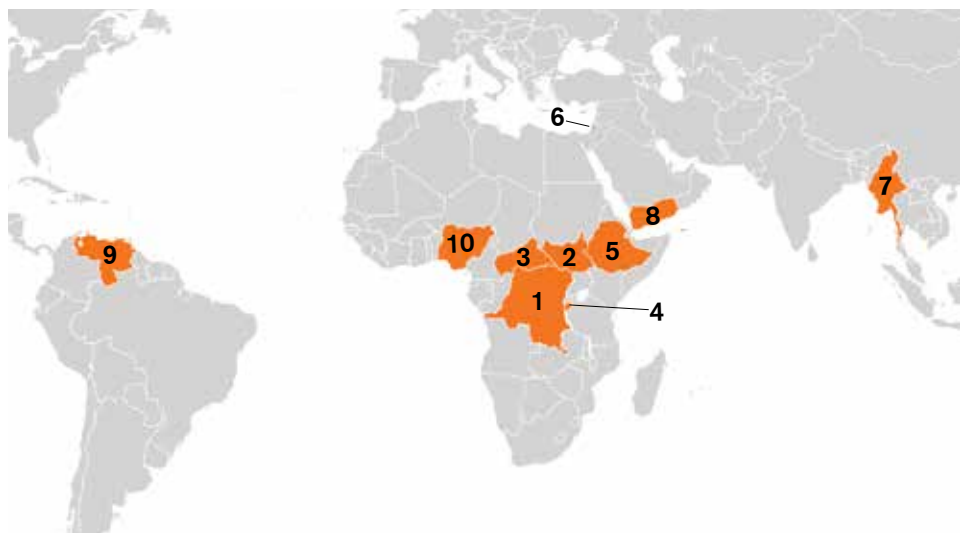
negotiations, and international actors' unwillingness or inability to find political solutions. The existence of a peace process, a decrease in the number of displaced people or other positive developments are used here as indicators for some level of political will, while the lack of such processes, a deterioration of the situation for civilians and increase displacement indicate the opposite.

- **Lack of media attention:** Various factors determine whether or not a crisis receives media coverage. The level of media attention is not necessarily proportional to the size of a crisis. Also, even when media reports about a conflict, the situation for civilians and those displaced may be overshadowed by coverage of war strategies, political alliances and fighting between armed groups. When developing the list, we measured media attention in 2017 through Meltwater's media monitoring results. To compare media attention with the size of the crisis, we divided the potential media reach for articles about the relevant displacement crisis, with the number of people displaced.

- **Lack of economic support:** Every year, the UN and its humanitarian partners create humanitarian funding appeals to cover the basic needs in countries affected by large crises. But, the extent to which the appeals are met has varied greatly. We used the percentages of the appeals covered in 2017 to indicate the levels of economic support. However, it should be noted that the real picture may be skewed by the tendency to ask for less funding for a crisis, when there is an understanding that it is next to impossible to attract the necessary funding.

List of the most neglected displacement crises

1. The Democratic Republic of the Congo
2. South Sudan
3. Central African Republic
4. Burundi
5. Ethiopia
6. Palestine
7. Myanmar
8. Yemen
9. Venezuela
10. Nigeria



1 THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Never before in the violent history of DR Congo have more people been displaced than in 2017.

DR Congo is experiencing one of the world's most critical and complicated humanitarian crises. By the end of 2017, a total of 4.5 million Congolese were internally displaced, and around 700,000 had fled to neighbouring countries.

Violence, diseases, malnourishment and displacement characterise the lives of ordinary people in large parts of the country. Schools have been destroyed and women and children are at risk of abuse. Displaced people, 60 per cent of them children, have large, unaddressed needs for protection, healthcare and education.

A total of 8.9 million people lack access to food and clean drinking water. 2.2 million children are acutely malnourished. Health stations need rebuilding, cholera outbreaks are reoccurring and child soldiers continue to be recruited by armed groups.

A neglected crisis

Despite DR Congo and Syria having the same number of people in need, media attention on the former has been scarce. 2017 was no exception. The population of DR Congo has seen violent conflict for decades, and international attention is decreasing.

In October 2017, the UN declared the violent conflict an L3 crisis, UN's highest level of emergency, on par with the emergencies in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. This implied that the humanitarian system would need to step up the preparedness and respond quickly to cover the enormous need for emergency relief. Despite this important move, the necessary funding was not provided. International donors only contributed with a little more than half the amount that the UN and aid organisations considered necessary to cover the humanitarian needs.

Despite increasing humanitarian needs, the number of aid organisations has decreased in several provinces. In North



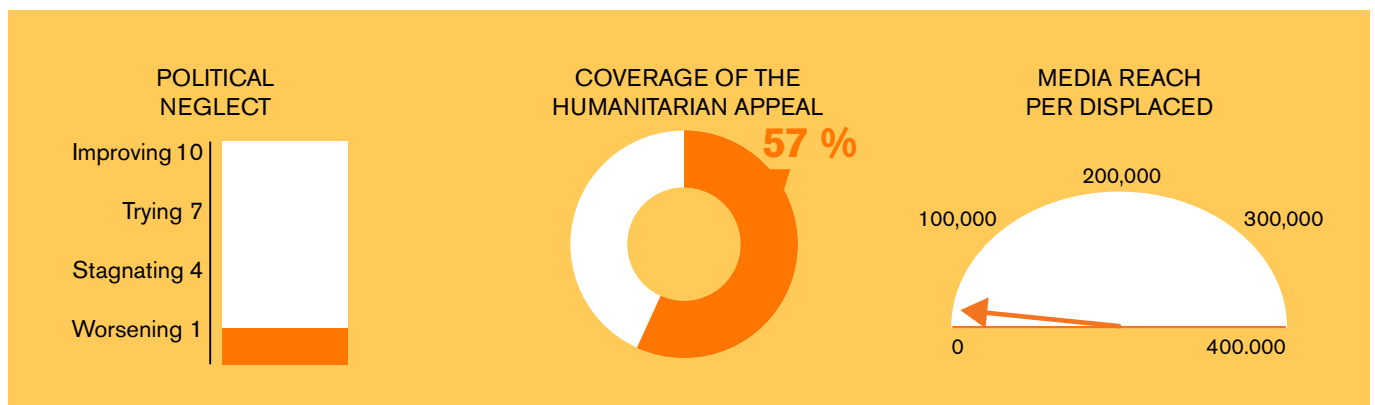
Photo: Christian Jepsen/NRC

Kivu, the number of organizations has gone down by half, even though one-in-four internally displaced people reside in this province.

In 2018, the UN launched its largest humanitarian appeal so far, for DR Congo. It amounts to US \$1.680 billion and will cover the needs of 10.5 million people. To be able to meet the appeal, the international community will have to quadruple its efforts compared to 2017. The lack of funding is very serious and without an immediate response, many human lives will be lost.

Many and complicated conflicts

People are forced to flee due to a range of armed groups fighting each other and the state. The conflicts in DR Congo are fuelled by ethnic rivalries, the struggle over natural resources and lack of government control. The armed groups range from small groups of armed bandits to larger guerrilla groups with centralised structures. Throughout 2017, new conflicts emerged in the Greater Kasai region, previously untouched by armed clashes. In the province of Tanganyika, long-simmering inter-ethnic tensions boiled over. In addition to these newer hotspots, older conflicts re-emerged and escalated in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, in the eastern parts of the country. The humanitarian crisis in DR Congo is expected to worsen and will likely spread further across the Great Lakes region.



2

SOUTH SUDAN



Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/NRC

As the civil war in South Sudan enters its fifth year, the resulting humanitarian crisis has worsened. Over half the population relies on aid to survive. Violence has forced one in every three people from their homes, creating refugee crises in neighbouring Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia. Over 2.4 million South Sudanese have fled across the borders, in search of safety.

Despite aid agencies reversing pockets of famine in 2017, the hunger crisis has since worsened overall. Over 5 million people are now food insecure and famine threats are resurfacing.

Parties to the conflict have failed to uphold their responsibility to protect civilians, leaving

women and children to bear the brunt of the crisis. Half of all children under five are acutely malnourished. Nearly 2 million women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence.

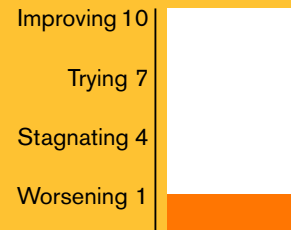
Delivering aid has become increasingly dangerous and challenging. One hundred aid workers have been killed since the current conflict broke out, with nearly a third killed last year.

Internationally backed efforts to implement a 2015-brokered peace deal have failed repeatedly, despite multiple rounds of talks, agreements and ceasefires. Warring parties lack the political will to end the war.

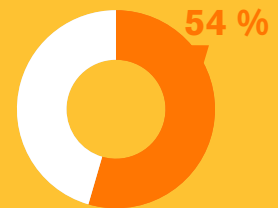
Global media attention towards the crisis has waned, partly due to rules that bar many international journalists from entering the country.

With alarm bells for famine ringing, mass starvation is on the horizon for the world's newest nation if the political momentum for peace is not resurrected.

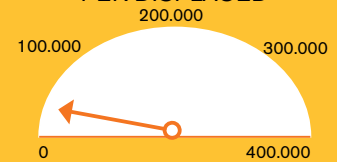
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* Humanitarian + regional response plan 2017

3

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



Photo: Tiril Skarstein/NRC

The conflict in Central African Republic topped the neglected displacement crises list last year, and 2017 offered no turn for the better. The conflict has moved down the list, only because of the drastic deterioration in neighbouring DR Congo and South Sudan.

Since late 2012, the Central African Republic has been wracked by a bloody, armed conflict. Clashes between the mostly Christian and animist group, known as anti-balaka and the predominantly Muslim groups, known as the ex-Seleka have forced thousands of people to flee their homes. A cease-fire was reached in 2014, followed by a national reconciliation forum and elections. But at the end of 2016 the conflict escalated

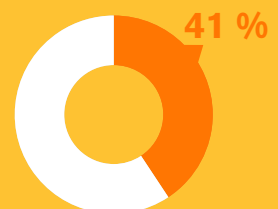
in the east of the country and spread to new areas. As a result, the number of internally displaced people increased by 70 per cent last year – reaching 689,000. At the same time the number of refugees has decreased, as some people have been able to return to more stable parts of the country. Still, 1.2 million people are now either internally displaced or have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. This means that one-in-four Central Africans is displaced.

Despite the escalation in the conflict, the crisis continued to receive little media attention and the humanitarian needs of the population are chronically neglected. With only 41 per cent of the appeal met, it was one of the least funded major crises in 2017. The political efforts have also been limited. Several truces have been signed, but not respected.

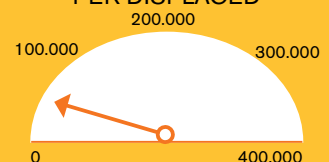
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4 BURUNDI



Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

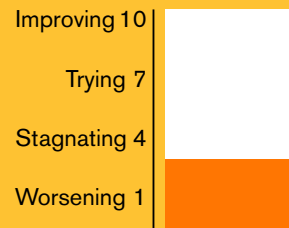
Since 2015, more than 400,000 people have fled Burundi because of political unrest and humanitarian crises, with the number of refugees increasing with around 20 per cent last year. A majority have sought refuge in neighbouring Tanzania, but also in Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They live in overcrowded refugee camps, with limited access to food, proper shelter and education. The Burundi Regional Refugee Response plan for 2017 was severely under-funded, and the World Food Programme had to cut its food rations to refugees in the region. There was also a lack of funding to cover the needs inside Burundi.

Burundi collapsed into civil war in the 1990s, due to skewed power relations between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. In 2015, when president Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would prolong his presidency, in violation of the constitution, violence escalated in the country, with a spike in detentions, rape and killings. Both the opposition and the government stand accused of human rights violations. Perpetrators are rarely held to account.

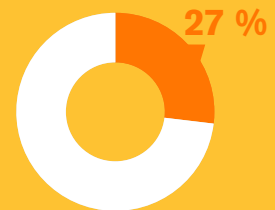
Despite a worsening political situation and an increase in displacement, the country received little media coverage. Furthermore, there have been very few major international initiatives to protect civilians or to provide the necessary push for political solutions.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation has exacerbated, with 3.5 million people in need of assistance and one in four people without sufficient food to eat.

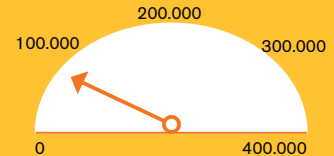
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* Humanitarian + regional response plan 2017

5 ETHIOPIA



Photo: Sidney Kung'u/NRC

Over one million Ethiopians fled their homes last year because of conflict and drought. A surge in insecurity around the border areas of Oromia and Somali regions after September displaced some 700,000 people. This often occurs in areas already suffering drought. Nearly all districts along the regional borders were affected. Many displaced families are still in need of assistance and recovery support.

In addition to conflict-driven displacement, Ethiopia suffered its worst drought in over 30 years, in 2017, due to multiple failed rain cycles. Severe drought continued in lowland pastoral areas in 2017, as well as parts of Oromia and Afar, leaving hundreds of thousands of people displaced and destitute.

Many communities were hit by both conflict and the effects of drought, forcing already vulnerable families further into destitution.

A mere 46 per cent of Ethiopia's international aid appeal was funded by the end of 2017, with only \$645 million of \$1.4 billion raised for relief operations. This has seriously stifled aid organisations' abilities to respond to conflict-affected communities and to the drought.

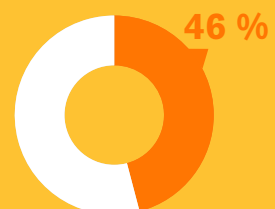
The international community worked closely, under the Government's leadership, managing to successfully avoid famine in 2017. But more help is needed. At the end of the year, the Government and humanitarian community launched an appeal alert for 2018, warning of continuing acute food insecurity for up to 7 million people, malnutrition and water shortages in the southern lowlands dominated by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities.

Many Ethiopians can expect another year of hardship and hunger unless substantial funding arrives, or the drought subsides. Despite this, the crisis remains largely off the international radar.

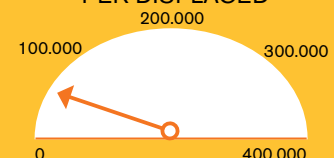
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6 PALESTINE



Photo: Wissam Nasser/NRC

With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes. 70 years later, they are still living as refugees, making Palestine one of the most protracted and neglected refugee crises in the world. The crisis has received much political attention and there have been numerous diplomatic efforts. However, there is no real international will to find a political solution for the Palestinian refugees. This is partly because Israel has not been open to discuss the Palestinian refugees' right to return.

Today, there are more than five million Palestinians registered as refugees. Many of them live as refugees in neighbouring Jordan

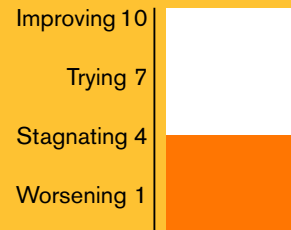
and Lebanon, and more than one million of them are in Gaza.

In Gaza, over ten years of blockade have led to horrendous living conditions for the whole population. 84 per cent of the population in Gaza is in dire need of humanitarian aid, but less than half of the funding needed to provide assistance came through last year. The blockade and recurring conflicts also bear disastrous consequences for people's mental well-being, with children in Gaza experiencing unusually high rates of traumatic nightmares.

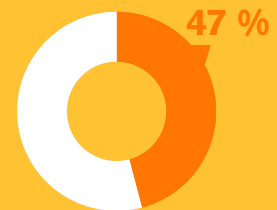
The US funding cuts for UNWRA, a UN relief organization set up to support Palestinian refugees, will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, unless other actors step up.

This year, the situation in Gaza attracted international attention, when people living in the enclave organized six weeks of protests demanding that Palestinian refugees and their descendants be allowed to return to what is now Israel. More than a hundred Palestinians were killed in the protests and thousands were wounded. However, the protests and the related media attention have not led to any changes.

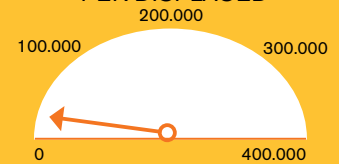
POLITICAL NEGLECT



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7 MYANMAR



Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Conflict escalated in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State in August 2017, resulting in the displacement of more than 700,000 people to neighbouring Bangladesh. At the time, the UN referred to this as the "world's fastest growing refugee crisis".

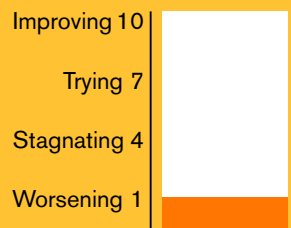
Most of the displaced are Rohingya, a Muslim minority, escaping reported extreme violence, persecution and human rights violations. In total, more than one million Rohingya refugees are currently living in Bangladesh, where aid workers have been overwhelmed by the massive needs. In the new camps set up around Cox's Bazar, newly displaced people

are worried about being involuntarily returned to their villages too early and without any information or guarantees of safety.

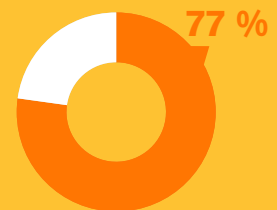
Inside Rakhine State, the lack of permissions from Myanmar's authorities for humanitarian organisations to do their work has left vulnerable civilians stranded without necessary support. No international actor with influence or governments of neighbouring countries, seem willing or able to stop the crisis. Further, journalists face heavy restrictions when trying to access to affected areas in Rakhine.

The last months have also seen a further escalation of armed conflict, including clashes directly impacting civilians in Kachin and northern Shan States. The conflict has injured and killed civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

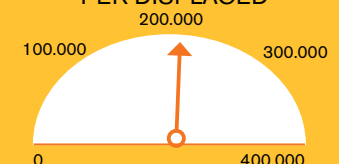
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* Humanitarian + regional response plan 2017

8 YEMEN



Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

Three years of war in Yemen have gradually corroded the safety nets available to millions of its people. Both major parties of the conflict have caused civilian deaths and suffering, created conditions that leave people sick and hungry, and frequently obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The conflict escalated in March 2015 and widespread violence has killed thousands of people and decimated basic services. More than two million people are displaced from their homes.

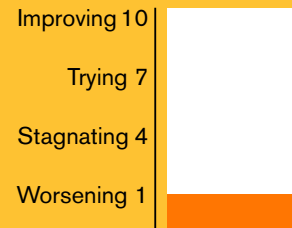
As 1.2 million public servants have gone without their usual salaries since August 2016, over half of the population is without access to basic healthcare, education, safe water or sanitation. The situation has led to

the world's largest cholera outbreak in decades, causing thousands of preventable deaths.

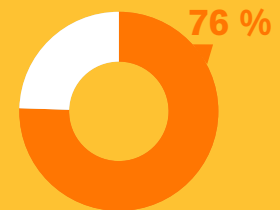
In November 2017, the Saudi-led coalition imposed a full blockade on Yemen's air and sea ports, blocking all food, fuel and medicine for several weeks. Ongoing obstructions at the ports have led to shortages and price hikes that make basic goods unaffordable. The country's main airport has been closed for almost two years and millions of Yemenis are left with no way out to access critical medical help abroad.

The scale of suffering in Yemen has been challenging for the media to cover, mainly due to restricted access. International journalists continue to be blocked from accessing most of the country, and Yemeni journalists are subject to tight controls, with high risks of harassment or detention. Humanitarian aid is now the only means by which millions of Yemenis can survive, but it does not solve the ever-deteriorating situation. Only a political solution to the war can halt and reverse the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

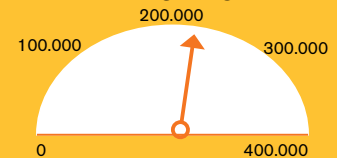
POLITICAL NEGLECT



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9 VENEZUELA



Photo: Luis Acosta/AFP

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 1.6 million Venezuelans left the country in 2017. While not all the Venezuelans leaving are prompted to do so for refugee-related reasons, it is becoming increasingly clear that a significant number are in need of international protection, according to UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The agency has reported a sharp increase in the number of asylum applications.

Displaced Venezuelans residing in border areas are in need of food, water, medicine, shelter and protection. The crisis impacts neighbouring countries and may destabilize an already fragile peace process in neighbouring Colombia. The international support for host countries must

be urgently scaled up to ensure that people receive the necessary assistance. Venezuelans, with no regular status in neighbouring countries, are subjected to labour exploitation and sexual exploitation and find it difficult to access proper health services. In Colombia people from Venezuela arriving in conflict areas provides non-state armed groups with a steady flow of potential victims and recruits. An appeal was launched in 2018 for \$102 million to respond to the Venezuelan displacement situation inside Colombia.

Inside Venezuela, a significant number of people are also in urgent need of assistance. According to ACAPS, the need for international support was significant last year, yet no humanitarian appeal was made.

The situation is receiving little media attention outside the region. The international response to the humanitarian needs, has so far had limited results. Venezuelans have good reason to be concerned that ordinary people will ultimately pay the price for sanctions as these measures deepen the scarcity of basic goods and increase basic needs.

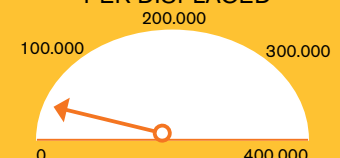
POLITICAL NEGLECT



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NO APPEAL

MEDIA REACH PER DISPLACED



10 NIGERIA



Photo: Rosalyn Velds/NRC

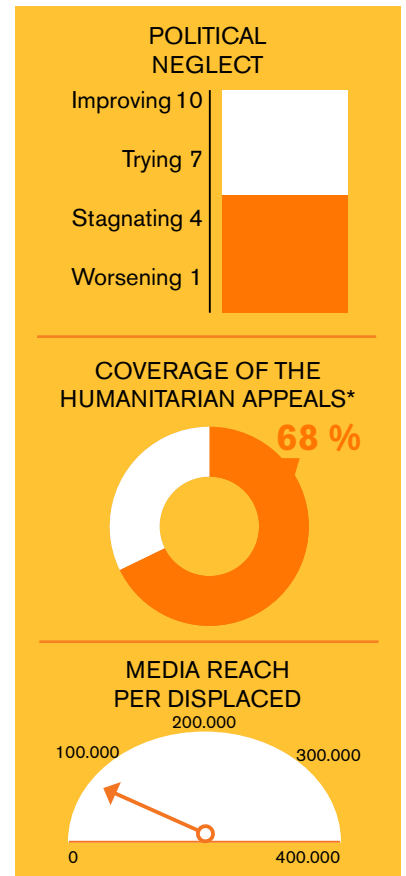
The conflict between the Nigerian Armed Forces and the armed group Boko Haram and associated splinter groups has continued to drive people from their homes in Northern Nigeria. Nigeria has intensified its military operations and Boko Haram is retaliating by stepping up attacks on soft targets, including refugees and internally displaced persons. While some people started to return, 1.7 million Nigerians were internally displaced and 200,000 lived as refugees in neighbouring countries by the end of 2017.

In a study conducted by NRC in October 2017, 86 per cent of the displaced people said they were not ready to go home yet.

Public services have collapsed in areas where the conflict has been raging. Nearly half a million homes and a large number of schools, health facilities and water supply sources have been destroyed.

8.5 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in Nigeria last year, and 450,000 children were suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Many people affected by the conflict have very limited access to humanitarian assistance, as ongoing hostilities and bureaucratic impediments make it difficult for humanitarian organizations to reach several areas.

Funds pledged at Oslo Conference for Lake Chad Basin in early 2017 helped forestall famine, but the crisis – which has its epicentre in Nigeria – still needs significant global attention. Most of the political and media attention focuses on the security aspect of the crisis, whereas the scales of displacement and humanitarian needs are often overlooked.



* Humanitarian + regional response plan 2017

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