



Displacements and Humanitarian Challenges in the context of Violent Extremism



Photo: Community displaced by violent extremism in Mali

BACKGROUND

Violent extremism has become an anathema globally and is synonymous with conflicts, death and destruction of both people and the environment. Over the past two decades, the activities of AQIM, Al-Shabab and Boko Haram in North, East and West Africa have become a source of growing concern. These extremist groups have contributed to huge humanitarian emergencies in Mali, Somalia and Nigeria. In Mali, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre IDMC- estimates that the number of people forced to flee their homes increased by 360% in 2018.¹

This alarming trend of escalating displacement in central and northern Mali is attributed to attacks by non-state armed groups, threats and intimidations, inter-communal conflicts and military operations.

These trends are also visible in Somalia where the Islamist armed group Al-Shabab has subjected people living under its control to harsh treatment, forced recruitment and deadly attacks against civilians. This has resulted in fighting and a lack of state protection and recurring humanitarian crisis. According to the UN, about 2.6million Somalis live in protracted internal displacement and face serious abuses including indiscriminate killings, forced evictions,

¹ IDMC/GRID 2019. Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>

sexual violence and limited access to basic services.²

Additionally, Nigeria suffered from suicide bombings and other associated attacks from the Boko Haram group over the past decade. The Norwegian Refugee Council indicates that the violent conflict waged by Boko Haram has caused one of the most severe crises in the world with 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 1.7 million people internally displaced.³ This conflict has also affected the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Civilians, particularly women and children continue to suffer material and psychological losses as well as violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during these conflicts. Resources are usually not enough and on time to alleviate the huge humanitarian deficits. Ongoing hostilities as well as the disproportionate military approaches to countering this menace further add to the intransigence of these militants and conflicts.

As the international community, states and humanitarian agencies continue to seek solutions to these challenges some dilemmas must be addressed in the short to long term.

Critical issues and questions that emanate from this challenge include:

- Are there more proactive non-military ways of countering violent extremists that are sustainable to prevent new attacks and waves of displacement?
- What can be done to protect the rights of vulnerable populations (women and children) in responding to extremist threats, and in rebuilding communities after attacks?
- How can the international community, affected states, humanitarian organisations, religious groups, civil society, communities collaborate to mitigate humanitarian impacts?

About KAIPTC

Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) is an internationally preferred centre of excellence for research into and training for conflict prevention, management and resolution, research and innovative thinking in integrated peace support operations and sustainable delivery of enhanced regional capacity building for peace support operations.

www.kaiptc.org

² World Report 2019: Somalia Human Rights Watch: Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/somalia>

³ Reliefweb International Report, Nigeria, 2019. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/what-you-should-know-about-humanitarian-crisis-north-east-nigeria>