



Nigeria: Assessment of Christian situation in four north-eastern states (June 2017)

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Nigeria: Assessment of Christian situation in four north-eastern states

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The remains of the Catholic Church in Mubi, Adamawa State (Source: Open Doors, 2017)

Contents

1 Introduction	3
1.1 Purpose of the assessment	3
1.2 The method of assessment and location of interviews	4
2 General situation analysis of north-eastern Nigeria	6
2.1 Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen	6
2.2 The impact of years of violence	8
2.3 Recent developments in general.....	10
2.4 The situation of the church	13

3 The situation of Christians in the different states and their needs	16
3.1 Yobe State	16
3.1.1 Introduction.....	16
3.1.2 The situation of Christians in Yobe State	16
3.1.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Yobe State	17
3.2 Borno State.....	18
3.2.1 Introduction.....	18
3.2.2 The situation of Christians in Borno State.....	18
3.2.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Borno State.....	19
3.3 Adamawa State	20
3.3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.3.2 Situation of Christians in Adamawa State	20
3.3.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Adamawa State	22
3.4 Taraba State	23
3.4.1 Introduction.....	23
3.4.2 The situation of Christians in Taraba State	23
3.4.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Taraba State	25
4 Summary	26
Appendix: Assessment Data.....	29

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the assessment

Open Doors has been involved in Nigeria for many years. Extensive research was carried out from 2014 to 2016 resulting in the report “Crushed but not defeated”¹ concerning ethno-religious violence and how it has affected Christians in northern Nigeria. During this and other research, the immense needs of Christians fleeing Boko Haram violence became apparent. Many have sought refuge in state capitals, other cities or villages and even neighboring countries.

NGOs operating in north-eastern Nigeria have been unable to offer enough help, since the needs (e.g. the number of refugees) are enormous, and many refugees live in areas that are not (or hardly) accessible. The UN (OCHA²) and other agencies (among them the Dutch Relief Alliance, in which several Christian NGOs participate³) are doing the best they can. The need, however, is overwhelming. Apart from that, in the regular IDP camps Christian refugees testify that they often face discrimination during food/relief distribution carried out by international NGOs or by state agencies⁴. This fact is also confirmed in conversation with staff of various NGOs. It is for that reason that Christians often prefer to stay in informal Christian camps, for instance on church compounds, or in host communities in overcrowded houses of host families, where they often live in appalling conditions where people are literally starving, though practically unnoticed. To offer some relief, churches and a Christian NGO distributed lifesaving packages to Christian families in IDP camps or host families in Maiduguri in 2016 and another food relief programme was carried out in May/June 2017.

While the army declares they have defeated Boko Haram, and although aid agencies are offering relief to victims of this humanitarian crisis, it is clear that the situation of Christians in the ‘liberated’ areas remains precarious. Christians that are already traumatized are still being discriminated against compared to Muslims, and are often paralyzed by fear and hopelessness. In some areas people have been able to return to their villages; in other areas the security situation is not stable enough. In general, people lack the basic resources to return to normal personal, family and church life.

The assessment described in this report was carried out to investigate the specific needs of Christians who have returned to their villages or are planning to do so. The situation differs per area. Some villages have been destroyed completely: churches and houses have been looted or burned down, crops and boreholes have been destroyed. In other villages only the houses of Christians have been destroyed, while the houses of their Muslim neighbours remained untouched (to make matters more painful, some Muslim neighbours have looted the possessions of their Christian neighbors who fled). Some areas are relatively safe, while in other

¹ Crushed but not defeated: the impact of persistent violence on the church in northern Nigeria, Open Doors International, February 2016. Available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Crushed-but-not-defeated-Full-Report-1.pdf>, password: freedom.

² See: <https://www.unocha.org/nigeria>, last accessed on 8 May 2017.

³ E.g. CARE, Cordaid, Dorcas Aid International, ICCO/Kerk in Actie, OXFAM NOVIB, Save the Children, Tear, Terre des Hommes, Stichting Vluchteling, WarChild, World Vision and Stichting ZOA.

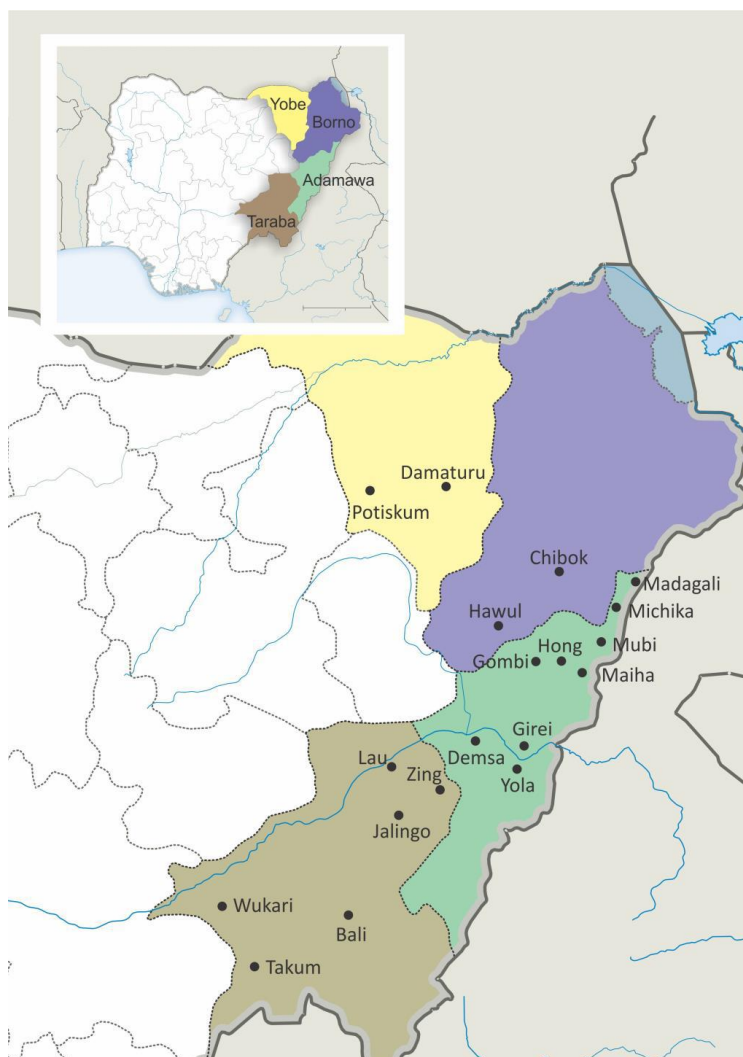
⁴ E.g. National Emergency Management Agency and State Emergency Management Agency.

areas people still sleep ‘in the field’ during the nights. It is clear that the different situations indicate different needs and solutions.

1.2 The method of assessment and location of interviews

For this report, the situation in north-eastern Nigeria was first analyzed through desk research. A research trip was then made to assess the situation on the ground together with local researchers. Visits were made to Yola, Mubi, Zing and Jalingo, and talks were held with church leaders, women, youth representative and representatives from several NGOs. Altogether, interviews were held in 35 different villages, often in remote and dangerous areas. For security reasons, the names of team members and of those interviewed are not published in this report.

Interviews and research was carried out in the region in February and March 2017. All results were then collated and analyzed and the report was drafted in June 2017. The assessment was conducted in the four states of Adamawa, Borno, Yobe and Taraba. Due to the current security situation most of the data collection took place in Taraba and Adamawa states. The map and table below indicate where interviews were conducted.



Map of north-eastern Nigeria showing LGAs visited for research purposes

State	LGA's	Villages
Adamawa	Demsu	Kodomun
		Kwajine
	Michika	Mbororo (Garta, Ngeri, Magw Garta, Kassa)
		Kobroshosho (Kura, Kubi, Stanza, Thuri, Kwazale, Che)
	Madagali	Vemgo (Ndigau, Vurokotuko, Ghabath, Alama, Hidik, Ghumsi, Cheklek, Makshik, Ngemango)
		Koppa
	Hong	Garaha
		Gashala Kufum
	Gombi	Gaada
		Garkida
	Girei	Koh Girei
		Gorong
	Mubi North	Muva
		Mujara
Mubi South	Sahuda	
	Buladega	
Maiha	Paka	
	Wuro Ladde	
Borno	Chibok	Peni
		Mbalala
	Hawul	Kirbutu
Taraba	Zing	Dindin
		Monkin
	Lau	Jimlani
		Garin Dogo
	Wukari	Gidan Doruwa
		Sondi
	Bali	Jatau
		Nahuta
Takum	Garn Ahmadu	
	Kashumbila	
Yobe	Damaturu	Jerusalem
	Potiskum	Potiskum
		Fika
4 states	18 LGA's	35 villages

2 General situation analysis of north-eastern Nigeria

2.1 Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen

Boko Haram started in 2002 in Maiduguri (in north-eastern Nigeria) as a movement around a young preacher, Mohammed Yusuf who especially appealed to the poor and unemployed young people who were discouraged by the corruption and lawlessness of their political leaders.⁵ Boko Haram is often translated as “Western education is forbidden (or wrong)”, while the original name of the movement translates as “People committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and jihad”, which was changed in 2015 to “Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya”, indicating that Boko Haram territory is considered a province of the so-called Islamic State group. The movement was a powder keg waiting to be lit and this happened in 2009, when police officers killed Boko Haram members during a funeral procession. Mohammed Yusuf answered with a heated sermon, but the more radical Abubakar Shekau incited violence and the situation exploded. Yusuf was killed by the police when arrested in July 2009, after which Abubakar Shekau succeeded him. Under his leadership Boko Haram radicalized even more. The aim of the movement has been to overthrow the government of Nigeria and to impose *Sharia*, a strict version of Islamic law. The first organized attacks in the region started in 2010, and it was only then that Christians were specifically targeted.⁶ The movement has since spread to surrounding countries and is known to be responsible for the killing of more than 20.000⁷ persons and the (internal or regional) displacement of another 2.5 million; many more people have lost their belongings and are severely traumatized.

The government has not been able to appease the situation, on the contrary, Boko Haram even gained sympathy under former President Goodluck Jonathan, due to the violent reaction of the army officers that were sent up to Borno State. It was only in 2013 that a state of emergency was declared, in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. The year 2014 is known as the peak of Boko Haram’s terrorist activities in these states: The group took the town of Gwoza which became their HQ, the ‘Gwoza Caliphate’, and from there their violent attacks were organized. In 2015 the first serious attempt was made to drive Boko Haram away, with the help of troops from Niger and Chad, after which President Muhammadu Buhari reclaimed the area. However, despite the claims of the Nigerian army and government, Boko Haram has never been completely defeated. The movement remains dangerous, especially because of its ties with the Islamic State group (IS) and other foreign militant groups. Boko Haram may have been dispersed, but there are still abductions, suicide bombings and killings going on.

In 2015, Shekau announced that Boko Haram was now officially part of the Islamic State group as its West Africa Province. However, in 2016 IS declared that it considered Abu Musab al-

⁵ See: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2016/11/boko-haram-rise-nigeria-armed-group-161101145500150.html> and <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501> last accessed 23 May 2017.

⁶ This is the opinion stated by Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, professor at the French Institute of Geopolitics, and quoted in <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2016/11/boko-haram-rise-nigeria-armed-group-161101145500150.html>, last accessed 23 May 2017.

⁷ Figure according to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, see <http://www.unocha.org/nigeria/about-ocha-nigeria/about-crisis>, last accessed 23 May 2017. Further referred to as: ‘OCHA’.

Barnawi, Yusuf's son, as leader which showed that the movement was divided, with one group remaining faithful to al-Barnawi and the other to Shekau. Until now Shekau's whereabouts are unknown, and he is only seen through video messages in which the movement claims responsibility for attacks.

The above mentioned report "Crushed but not defeated" indicates that not only Boko Haram, but also Muslim Fulani herdsmen and the Muslim political and religious leaders from the North should be considered as the responsible forces behind the violence.⁸ In interviews there was often no clear distinction between the effects of violence from Boko Haram or Fulani herdsmen. To the victims, it does not matter who the perpetrators are, whether their loved ones are killed by Boko Haram or Fulani herdsmen. People even stated tiredly: "It is all the same. Indeed, Boko Haram fighters have sometimes dressed like herdsmen, while Fulani herdsmen are not boys in rags with machetes, but come heavily armed⁹ and often on motor bikes (the original trademark of Boko Haram). Some villages reported that they had been attacked by one of the two while others reported having been attacked by both Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen. Apart from that, people from another village reported that after Boko Haram had left, many men were tortured by soldiers of the Nigerian army, a phenomenon that has also been reported by Amnesty International.¹⁰ Human Rights Watch reports that women and girls who had been liberated from Boko Haram were sometimes being abused by soldiers, vigilantes, camp officials, or even fellow IDPs.¹¹

In several research articles by the World Watch Research unit of Open Doors¹² it is suggested that, although there are socio-cultural, economic and political factors, the main motive for perpetrators of persistent violence is religious-based. The researchers stress that this was the way things happened in the past and that such historical factors need to be taken into account. This is in sharp contrast to what is generally communicated in the media: Even renowned organizations such as Human Rights Watch suggest that the "Fulani versus farmers" dispute is predominately over space and resources, i.e. due to environmental problems. Nevertheless, in an unpublished interview, Professor Yusufu Turaki stresses that the historical facts are being ignored if the latent hostility is disregarded which Muslim communities show towards their non-Muslim countrymen whom they consider inferior and therefore want to subordinate.¹³ During

⁸ These findings were confirmed during the conference "Nigeria, exploring the way forward" On 21 June 2017. This was held at the European Parliament in Brussels and was organized by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and African Diaspora for Freedom of Religion (ADFoR). It was hosted by Lars Adaktusson MEP.

⁹ Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan (Kaduna State) accused the government of inaction concerning this. See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/nigeria-bishop-accuses-authorities-of-inaction-in-face-of-wave-of-terror/>, last accessed on 27 May 2017.

¹⁰ See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/>, last accessed on 27 May 2017.

¹¹ See: See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/31/nigeria-officials-abusing-displaced-women-girls>, last accessed 27 May 2017.

¹² See: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nigeria-Investigating-common-narratives-of-violent-conflict-in-Nasarawa-State-2016.pdf>, <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Migration-and-Violent-Conflict-in-Divided-Societies-March-2015.pdf> and <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Ethnic-cleansing-in-the-Middle-Belt-Region-of-Nigeria-2015.pdf>, last accessed 27 May 2017 (password: freedom).

¹³ Unpublished interview held on 20 April 2017 with Yusufu Turaki, Professor of Theology and Social Ethics at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary. Further referred to as "Turaki 2017".

the time of the Sokoto Caliphate, Fulani moved down to the Middle Belt region to stage a jihad amongst their non-Muslim hosts, and it is happening today again. The current hostilities can be traced back to colonial times, when the British let the Muslim Hausa-Fulani (and Kanuri) rule over the 'indigenous' population. In recent years the Muslim revival in the Middle East caused a reawakening of a Muslim movement in West Africa that influenced the whole region of North Nigeria. Over the last 7 years or so the situation is more precarious and explosive than ever, because modern jihadists possess sophisticated weapons. Turaki emphasizes that we need to see the narrative in light of worldwide Islam: Fulani perpetrators as well as Boko Haram insurgents are radicalized Muslims, influenced by the Middle East.

Enforcing peace between the two parties (i.e. Christians and Muslim Fulani) will not be successful, according to Professor Turaki, as the Fulani do not respect nor recognize the human equality of non-Muslims, nor the justice system that should enforce it. Instead, there is impunity, as the Fulani are well connected in government circles. The government should enforce justice and equality between the two parties. Until now they have abandoned the people by leaving them unprotected. Muslims and Christians alike should find common ground in the fact that both religions believe that we are created as relational beings with "creational responsibilities" towards our fellow human beings.¹⁴

2.2 The impact of years of violence

As stated above, the rehabilitation assessment behind this report focused on four states: Yobe, Borno, Adamawa and Taraba. The common denominator is that all victims interviewed suffered from violence in one or another way, either directly or indirectly. The atrocities that were committed are unspeakable and the trauma these people experienced is unimaginable. Many of the people interviewed suffered from the attacks from 2011 to the present day. In Yobe people indicated that there were attacks by Boko Haram within the time-frame 2011-2015; and in Borno people reported that the heaviest attacks happened in 2014, although the state has been plagued by Boko Haram since the beginning of 2009. In Adamawa, some people stated that attacks by Boko Haram peaked in 2014 but started as early as 2010; others mention the time-frame as being 2014-2017, overlapping with recent Fulani attacks; in Taraba, attacks were mentioned as being mainly by Fulani (or "unknown gunmen"); some people mentioned attacks starting in 2011, others in 2014 but continuing into 2017.

The Boko Haram insurgencies have affected more than 14 million people.¹⁵ The situation in north-eastern Nigeria is extreme since people are not only suffering at the hands of Boko Haram, but also from Fulani herdsmen, security forces, vigilantes, the police and soldiers. It is estimated that the violence in this region in Nigeria has cost the lives of more than 20.000 persons and the (internal or regional) displacement of another 2.5 million.¹⁶ Many people have been killed, or

¹⁴ Turaki 2017.

¹⁵ See: Amnesty Nigeria Report 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/>, last accessed 27 May 2017.

¹⁶ Figures according to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, see <http://www.unocha.org/nigeria/about-ocha-nigeria/about-crisis>, last accessed 23 May 2018.

have seen that their relatives were killed, often before their very eyes. People's lives have been disrupted, because many people lost family members, while others (women, youth and children) were abducted. Many abducted women have suffered physical and sexual abuse. Many children are also traumatized, because they have lost parents or other family members, or because they have experienced gruesome things themselves; many of them have been abducted and 'recruited' to be wives, labourers or child soldiers, and they need trauma care and help to reintegrate into society. Whether people stayed and were able to survive the attacks, or whether they were able to escape to safer areas, they all have suffered beyond understanding. People in general are severely traumatized and the need for trauma counselling is enormous.

Many people have lost their homes and belongings and have fled to safer areas, to IDP-camps, to host communities or host families. Most of these people lack basic human resources such as food, water, shelter, education, protection from harm, and freedom of movement. All NGOs consulted in the preparation of this report insisted that the situation inside and outside the camps is dire, and urgent, as people are literally starving. However, the situation differs per state, per LGA and per city. For instance, the city of Yola (Adamawa State), considered to be a relatively safe haven, was flooded with IDPs from southern Borno and northern Adamawa after Boko Haram attacks in 2014.¹⁷ The city of Mubi, however, fell to the insurgents, who destroyed many houses, and many people fled to Cameroon, Yola or escaped to the mountains. Although at first sight Yola suffered less, the situation is still harrowing due to the many IDPs, with the majority staying in host communities and only small numbers resident in camps. The same happened in the city of Maiduguri (Borno State).

Food security is a huge issue. According to the WWM article, 'Northeast Nigeria "greatest crisis on the African continent", says UN',¹⁸ 14 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, and more than half of them are considered 'severely food insecure', while 75,000 children are at risk of dying. It is shocking to see and hear that people in the region are actually starving. Many people interviewed for this report stated that their first need was food, some saying that they had not eaten in days. People are under pressure, and fear that even in the near future they will not be able to provide for their families, as often the tools and lands of farmers have been destroyed, their crops and seeds for the next harvest have been stolen or burned, fishing nets and tools of fishermen have been destroyed, shops and businesses have been burned down or looted. Apart from that, they are often too afraid to go to their farm, as they might be attacked. During one interview the example was shared of a man who went to his farm, and as soon as he was finished harvesting his yams, a Fulani herdsman who had been hiding in a tree, came down, killed the man and took his food. In the rainy season some people returned to their lands, and some people mentioned that they go to their lands during the day, but 'sleep in the mountains'.

Many water points and bore holes have been destroyed during attacks. Although many were repaired by the UN and other NGOs, in interviews it was mentioned several times that people still have limited access to water. Some people said that water points were repaired in Muslim

¹⁷ See the Needs Assessment report Yola 2015 of International Rescue Committee, available at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nigeria/assessment/needs-assessment-report-yola-adamawa-march-2015>, accessed on 27 May 2017. Further referred to as: 'IRC 2015'.

¹⁸ See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/03/ne-nigeria-greatest-crisis-on-the-african-continent-says-un/>, last accessed on 29 May 2017. Further referred to as 'WWM March 2017'.

neighborhoods or villages, but not in theirs, or that they feel too scared to go there. Other people that drink water from holes dug in the dry river beds, stated that Fulani sometimes let their cattle trample the water places on purpose. Women living in areas that are still volatile, and that depend on water from streams, are often too scared to draw it. Even in the cities, in host communities, or in the provisional camps, there are not enough water points. World Watch Monitor (WWM) states in an article that “75% of north-east Nigeria’s water and sanitation infrastructure is destroyed, and that 3.8 million people have no access to safe water”.¹⁹

People do not have enough access to health care, either because health care centers have been destroyed, or because access is being denied. The above mentioned WWM article²⁰ states that one third of the health facilities in Borno has been destroyed and that one third is non-functional. Because there is no or not enough access to healthcare, already vulnerable people run the risk of becoming seriously ill (e.g. through lack of medicines, vaccines and mosquito nets).

Many churches, houses and shops have been destroyed. This differs per state and city: some (Christian) villages were completely destroyed (Kodomun in Adamawa, and Gidan Doruwa in Taraba), while in other villages only some houses were destroyed or looted. Many people have lost their belongings, and are therefore in dire need of the most basic household items such as pots, pans, mattresses and clothes. Schools have been destroyed, teachers have been killed. Even if there are still schools standing, people often do not send their children to school out of fear of further attacks - especially by Boko Haram. Other people mentioned that they do not have enough money for school fees or uniforms.

2.3 Recent developments in general

People shared in interviews that they were very eager to go back to their village. Life in a refugee camp is hard; there is not enough food or water and not enough security. Many NGOs that were already active in the region before the insurgencies shifted their emphasis to aid relief programmes, but they are often hindered in their work because of the insecurity. Although during the insurgencies Muslims were also victims, Christians were specifically targeted. In the camps these Christians feel extremely vulnerable (see 2.4), and they often withdraw to Christian camps or Christian host families if it is not possible to return to their villages.

Children and women are especially vulnerable and in urgent need of protection, regardless of whether they are still in camps, host communities or back in the villages. Women and girls are often limited in their movements and many times experience sexual violence, either outside (for instance, while collecting fire wood or fetching water) or at their own ‘home’.²¹ This often involves men offering basic services (water, food, healthcare) or assistance in household chores in exchange for sexual favours. This was confirmed by people in the interviews carried out for this report. In Yola, one widow shared very bravely that this used to happen to her, and that it was only when she overcame her shame and shared it with the pastor that it stopped. Many

¹⁹ See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/05/boreholes/>, last accessed on 29 May 2017. Further referred to as ‘WWM May 2017’.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ See: IRC 2015, pages 9-10.

children are traumatized, because they have lost parents or other family members, or because they have been recruited as labourers or child soldiers, and they need trauma care and help to reintegrate into society. Churches and NGOs do what they can with the little means they have, but there is an overwhelming need for trauma counselling, which is a prerequisite to be able to rebuild society.

The fate of many abducted people remains unknown. People from all around the world sympathized with the 276 girls from Chibok that were kidnapped in April 2014, but many do not realize that these girls are just a fraction of the thousands of people that have been abducted. For instance, when the people of Damasak (Borno State) returned to the city having lived as refugees, they found out that 500 of their young people were missing - most of whom had been abducted by Boko Haram.²² Most of the people that have escaped their abductors are severely traumatized and are often mistrusted and stigmatized in their own community; the ones that are still unaccounted for are most probably being used as wives, sex-slaves, laborers, child soldiers or suicide bombers, if they have not already been killed. The abduction of girls by Boko Haram “is a carefully calculated part of the movement’s multi-pronged front-line offensive which is designed to intimidate the population into accepting political-religious change”.²³ This was confirmed by interviews carried out. Fear and uncertainty hinders people from picking up the pieces and rebuilding their lives.

Many people have lost loved ones. Sometimes relatives were able to bury their dead, but often families were unable to give them a decent burial as their bodies were never found. In Mubi a lady explained how her little son kept making drawings and little boxes “to bury his father once they find his body”. Other people do not know what has happened to their relatives, since many families split up and ran to different places when they fled. The uncertainty about whether their loved ones are in hiding, or have been killed, imprisoned or abducted paralyzes people when they try to rebuild their lives.

In 2015 the first serious attempt was made to drive Boko Haram away, with the help of neighboring Niger and Chad. President Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigerian government and the army repeatedly claimed that Boko Haram had now been defeated, and this was published in several news articles. When, at the end of March 2017, Boko Haram kidnapped twenty-two young girls, this was denied by the Nigerian army which stated: “Boko Haram has been defeated in the area”.²⁴ However, this claim was denied by evidence collected in interviews for this report. Local contacts and other news articles confirmed the abduction of the twenty-two girls.²⁵ The daily reality shows that Boko Haram may have been dispersed, but that there are still abductions, suicide bombings and killings going on.

²² See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/500-children-taken-by-boko-haram-from-one-northern-nigeria-city/>, last accessed on 27 May 2017.

²³ A quote from WWR’s report “Our Bodies, Their battleground” in <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/background/boko-haram-justify-kidnap-230-nigerian-teenage-girls/>, last accessed 27 May 2017.

²⁴ See: <http://saharareporters.com/2017/04/01/nigerian-army-denies-boko-haram-attack-pulka-0/>, last accessed 7 April 2017.

²⁵ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/01/boko-haram-kidnaps-22-girls-and-women-in-north-east-nigeria>, last accessed 7 April 2017.

The ongoing attacks and abductions show that there is still not enough security in the region, and this is hindering people from going back to their villages. This is not only what interviewed people shared in the regions plagued by Boko Haram, but also in the states where Fulani perpetrators are active. The government tries to promote the return of people to their villages, but people are still afraid that new attacks may happen. On 14 February 2017 a press conference was organized by leaders and representatives of Boko Haram victims from 7 LGAs in Adamawa State; the press release stated that after the army's claim of the defeat of Boko Haram people had come out of their hiding only to find out that the reality on the ground was different.

The government has not been able to guarantee total security, but in some areas the situation has improved. In interviews for this report it was asked whether people had been able to return to their villages. The answers differed per village or city. In general, people tend to stay in the cities, or in the LGA main towns, as they feel safer in towns than in smaller villages or settlements. But as soon as the planting season starts, farmers in particular want to go back to their fields. Often, however, the land is confiscated or tools have been destroyed, so there is nothing to do but wait for help from outside. One of the reasons for IDPs not to return, is that they do not have access to materials to reconstruct a shelter. It was mentioned several times that some of them 'sleep 'in the field' or 'in the mountains' out of fear, but work on their farm during the day. Sometimes it is not safe enough at all to go back, and people have died trying. Some (mainly Christian) villages have been destroyed completely, and people have simply given up the idea of going back there.

Nearly all interviewees stated that it is hard to return and to start from zero. Food security is essential: It is difficult to live, let alone work, on an empty stomach. And many people suffer as they do not know how to provide for their families. One lady in Mubi confirmed that marriages and families suffer for that very reason: "A hungry man is an angry man". Many houses have been destroyed, and people have started to rebuild their houses, sometimes with only the remaining pieces of the old houses. As many boreholes and water points have been ruined, life has become more difficult. For some farmers their livelihood has become impossible as their land, seeds and tools have been destroyed; others shared that it is not safe since people are being attacked if they travel to their farms. Some fishermen explained that their boats and nets have been destroyed; others shared that they were shot at when they tried to go out fishing. Shopkeepers shared that their shops have been destroyed, burned, looted or confiscated; they do not have the means to buy new stock to sell. Children are being kept from school, because either the school has been burned down or the teachers killed, or people cannot afford to pay the school fees, or parents fear further attacks on schools. Because of psychological trauma, many people are depressed and have lost hope, which paralyzes them. Life in the community has become tense; there is mistrust if victims are living among perpetrators, especially in Muslim dominated areas; and in general there is now tension between Christians and Muslims, whereas they used to live together in peace. Overall, people feel left alone and betrayed by the government, which cannot provide security and leaves the perpetrators unpunished. This was also stated in the February 2017 press conference mentioned above.

During the interviews there were also positives stories told about people who have slowly started to rebuild their lives. All of them, however, state that the situation is difficult. People

that live in Christian communities, that have networks from church or family and people that have received help from outside, are better off than others that have lost family members, do not have a supporting community, cannot attend church services and feel left out by the rest of the world.

2.4 The situation of the church

Christians often feel unsafe and vulnerable in the regular IDP-camps and are always on their guard, as their Muslim neighbors in the camp may sympathize with the Boko Haram or Fulani attackers. They feel that they cannot express themselves and say that they are hindered if they want to organize Christian gatherings or worship services. This feeling that they are treated as second-hand citizens is reinforced when Christians are being discriminated against during food distribution. This was expressed numerous times during the interviews carried out, and this seems to be the general view of Christians. There is evidence that NGO-activities run mainly through Muslim staff and Muslim chiefs, as related in the above-mentioned February 2017 press release. Because Christians often withdraw to Christian camps or Christian host families, their voice is not being heard in the media. Therefore, although Muslims are also suffering under the insurgencies, Christians are suffering disproportionately.

The discrimination goes further than just in food distribution. Christians are often discriminated against when it comes to job possibilities. Students are denied professional courses at universities (such as nursing, medicine, law) and are offered non-professional courses (that have less job opportunities upon completion). Church leaders from Adamawa state shared that Muslims have most leadership positions and that they dominate the media: Even though many churches have been destroyed by Muslims, and comparatively few mosques have been damaged by security forces that fought against Boko Haram, the media hardly ever covers the destruction of churches. For instance, in the 7 most affected LGAs of Adamawa State more than 400 churches were attacked and only eight mosques, while in the news the same mosques were being shown again and again. Muslims receive money from the government to reconstruct their mosques and hospitals in predominantly Muslim areas are being rebuilt. Those in Christian areas did not receive such help. Federal government aid, or even foreign, international aid, is mainly being channeled through Muslim organizations, and Christians do not or hardly benefit. This was confirmed during many interviews with church members, church leaders and even NGOs.

It was shared several times that Christians are being persecuted and discriminated on a daily basis. Muslims make use of the vulnerable situation of poor Christian girls, and either abduct them or lure them into marriage with a Muslim man. When the girls' parents protest, they are not being heard, as the officials have been bribed or are otherwise implicated. During the insurgencies, Boko Haram members killed husbands and children before the eyes of women, after which they forced them to marry them. Some examples were given of Muslims who looted the properties of Christians, or who bought or sold properties from Christians who had fled during the insurgencies and whose property papers had been burned. Rich Muslims, probably from outside Nigeria, seem to sponsor the Islamic agenda: Fulani are carrying expensive imported weapons, Muslims get money to buy land and register it in their name.

The government does not seem to be impartial: Fulani are allowed to carry weapons, and they come and steal and attack people at night, while 'normal citizens' are not allowed to arm and defend themselves. If security forces are warned, they delay in responding. People, therefore, do not trust government officials anymore. They feel left alone but people often mentioned during the interviews that because of the contact with a Christian NGO they knew that God had not forsaken them - they were not only talking about aid or training, but also about the mere presence of staff and volunteers.

According to the February press release, most Christians are not located in IDP-camps, but stay with friends and relatives in host communities. People tend to move to the main towns in LGAs and then move from (Christian) camps to host families. Many Christians are still in the villages and wait for the 'green light' to go back to their homes. If the government can guarantee their safety, if they have food for the moment, if there are prospects for a better future, they will return.

It is hard to assess the damage that the church has suffered. Many churches have been destroyed. Also, many other church buildings have been burned (parish houses, community halls, etc.). Church seating has been burned and Bibles and hymnbooks destroyed. People often gather 'under trees' when the church is still in ruins. Christians expressed in the interviews that it is important for them to have their own building, as this gives them a sense of security, although a simple wall cannot protect them, but at least they feel less exposed. Rebuilding the church is difficult, as church income has dropped and many church members are either refugees themselves or are hosting them.

Very differing stories about the unity amongst churches were shared. During a meeting with church leaders on Adamawa State level in Yola, pastors, youth leaders and CAN representatives made it clear that the church is divided. However, research visits showed that pastors from different denominations listened to one another during the meetings and that there was mutual respect. There was more evidence of tension between the different protestant denominations and Roman Catholic congregations in Taraba State.

Many pastors were amongst the refugees fleeing attacks; interviews showed that some of them returned willingly and others returned because their superiors told them to. It was mentioned several times that both church members and pastors were totally unprepared for the militant attacks. Many pastors said they felt ill-equipped to give pastoral care or trauma counselling, and that they lack insight in a theology of suffering and the concept of a holistic approach to be able to preach well, relevant to the situation.

When people return to the village, life is hard. Church members live in fear, some stopped going to church out of fear of bomb attacks during the service. In the cities most churches have built road blocks and security posts outside their church buildings. Other people stopped going to church altogether. Several people interviewed reported that some members were disillusioned with God and had returned to African Traditional Religion (ATR). Many Christians expressed their mistrust of Muslim neighbors and related how they had difficulty to forgive them. On one hand people are disappointed that church numbers drop, that people stop evangelizing and

organizing outreaches. On the other hand, some interviewees stated that their faith has grown, and they have become stronger. Christians try to reach out to the needy and visit members that are discouraged. It was shared several times that Muslim neighbors had also asked questions, and some even became Christians when they realized that the local Christians were not going to retaliate. They were impressed by the way Christians did not accuse but chose to forgive their Muslim neighbors who had looted their possessions. Women who had escaped from Boko Haram and had suffered terribly, found strength in their faith in God and in the fellowship with other victims, and their testimony encouraged other women to be strong and to share their own stories.

The youth is a huge concern in all states. Especially young men tend to want to retaliate and pick up arms. The interviews revealed that young men are disappointed in their own parents, especially the fathers, who were not able to protect them, while their whole life (and in their eyes, their whole future) was being destroyed. They are disappointed in their church leaders, who stand back and tell them to submit, while the only thing they want to do is to take revenge. They are often disappointed in God, because they listened to the teaching that told them they would be blessed if they were good Christians. Some young people have also gone back to ATR, seeking protection. Pastors expressed several times that they feel helpless and lack the skills and (Biblical) knowledge to deal well with the youth.

Private schools are too expensive for Christians. Muslim schools are far cheaper, so Christians are tempted to send their children there. Public, government schools, are more affordable than private schools, but many parents even cannot afford the school fees (and uniforms) for these schools. In those schools Islam is being promoted and there are very few Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) teachers present, while there are always a lot of Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) teachers.

3 The situation of Christians in the different states and their needs

In the following a description will be given of the situation of the Christians in the different states: Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, and Taraba, mostly based on the interviews that were held in the villages for this report. First the current situation will be explained, and how Christians were affected, in case this deviates from what has been described in section 2.3 and 2.4. This is followed by a description of what they consider as their needs using the subdivisions Spiritual, Physical, Social, Psychological and Economic.

3.1 Yobe State

3.1.1 Introduction

Yobe is a Sharia state, and one of the states where Boko Haram has been most active. The main attacks by Boko Haram occurred from 2011 till 2015 and caused a lot of destruction. The attacks from Boko Haram were not only aimed at Christians, but the movement was also attacking the police and army officers (who would then stage counter attacks), public officials, and many (non-Quranic) schools, also those of (Shia) Muslims - i.e. all people that did not agree with the teachings of Boko Haram.²⁶ Citizens expressed their discontent and suspected that Boko Haram had gained support amongst the security forces, as sometimes soldiers withdrew directly before an attack, or they would respond hours too late.²⁷ For Christians, the situation was even worse. Since Yobe is a Sharia state, persecution through discrimination and marginalization was and is a constant reality. This is far worse in communities with a Muslim majority.

The interviews showed that the situation had calmed down to a certain degree and the danger of imminent violent attacks had dropped significantly, but people were still afraid of possible further violence and faced daily persecution through discrimination and marginalization.

3.1.2 The situation of Christians in Yobe State

Spiritual

It seems that - especially in villages with a Muslim majority - less Christians returned, that church attendance had gone down and that the number of church members had dropped. However, people expressed that those church members remaining were now more dedicated and more involved in church activities than before. People were united and spiritually strong, despite the extremely difficult situation. The church teaches forgiveness and reconciliation and people (even Muslim neighbors) realize that this is necessary, regarding the recent past. It was mentioned a Muslim had become a Christian, but that the church did not know 'where to keep him' out of fear of attack.

²⁶ See, for instance: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/11/world/africa/nigeria-suicide-bomber-boko-haram.html>, last accessed 8 June 2017.

²⁷ See: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26353622>, last accessed 8 June 2017.

Physical

People's basic needs are not being met. There is no proper health care available. Schools in the region have been closed for years. Christian children are badly treated, even abused, at schools and in public. People face constant discrimination and marginalization: Christian women are denied care at health and maternity clinics. Young people have hardly any access to education and vocational training.

Social

Many families have lost loved ones, but try to maintain cordial relationships within the families. Christians try to encourage one another, and there is a sense of unity. Living in a Sharia state means facing persecution, in any form and at any time (beatings, rape and abuse were mentioned). Christians are living under constant threat as the perpetrators of the recent violence are living right amongst them. Whether they live in 'Christian ghettos' or as a minority among Muslims, they feel vulnerable all the time. Christians face discrimination in daily life.

Psychological

During the interviews, the fact that people were traumatized was downplayed. In summary it was basically said: "Some people are traumatized, but the church is doing its best to help them". From what was described, however, it was clear that many people, especially widows and children (also orphans), were very much traumatized.²⁸ It was specifically mentioned that discrimination and scorn is affecting the self-esteem of children.

Economic

Life is difficult because farmland has been confiscated, shops have been looted or burned down and people lack the means to restart their businesses. Due to poverty and segregation, both adults and youth are suffering; there are no jobs, no (money for) vocational training and skills acquisition, and they have become desperate. Christians are hindered even if they want to rent land. People keep up, but with much difficulty, and face discrimination on a daily basis.

3.1.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Yobe State

Spiritual

Christians are under pressure. People need to be encouraged, and need help to rebuild churches and pick up church life. Especially Christians in villages with Muslim majority are vulnerable, and need encouragement and teachings on how to remain strong and live as Christians in a hostile environment.

Physical

The need for rehabilitation, (school fees and) education, vocational training, health care and skill acquisition was mentioned.

²⁸ It is possible that people are too busy surviving that they do not realize that they are traumatized. Another reason could be that they do not have the knowledge about the concept of trauma: many questions about trauma care were understood, here and also in other places, in terms of 'physical support'.

Social

Christians in Yobe are vulnerable, because they live in a Sharia state and face constant discrimination, but they see the value of good relationships within families and church. This could be used as a foundation to teach people on care for widows and children (who are being marginalized) and trauma counselling.

Psychological

There is a need for trauma counselling, whether people recognize it or not. People (adults and children) need to be encouraged, as they are under constant threat and scorn. Widows and orphans need special care.

Economic

Christians (women, men, and youth) are in desperate need of obtaining the means to make a living, to start a business or skill acquisition.

3.2 Borno State

3.2.1 Introduction

Sharia law was officially introduced in Borno in 2000. Since Borno was home to the Boko Haram movement, the impact of the violence was felt directly and the needs are enormous. Life has been disrupted because many men were killed and many people were kidnapped (mainly women and girls, but also young men and boys). The people that were not able to flee during the attacks came to the main towns after the army liberated Borno, and safe zones were created. The situation in these makeshift camps was so bad, that people still fled to Maiduguri, thus increasing the pressure on the city. The most basic needs for Christians are not being met: food, water, sanitation and shelter. In 2016, a Christian NGO distributed lifesaving packages to Christian families in IDP camps or host families in Maiduguri; in June and July 2017 a second relief programme was carried out. The relief packages are received with joy, but only offer temporary relief.

3.2.2 The situation of Christians in Borno State

Spiritual

Many churches have been destroyed, church attendance has decreased and numbers have dropped because many people fled. Christians have experienced horrible things during the insurgencies, and still live in fear of new attacks, and face discrimination and marginalization on a daily basis.

Physical

Borno State is marginalized and underdeveloped, and Christians are often poor and illiterate, which makes them more vulnerable. Many NGOs brought aid to Borno State, but often Christians did not benefit. According to OCHA, half a million children were expected to suffer

from severe acute malnutrition in 2017.²⁹ People are suffering from hunger, there is not enough clean water and this could lead to more cases of malaria and an increase in other water-borne diseases such as cholera.

Social

The people that have survived, value their community and family ties, especially in Christian villages. However, they also felt left alone, as the government was not able to protect them. Since vigilante groups have been established they feel more secure. These groups, however, bring their own problems; especially the youth struggle with a wish to retaliate, and feel that the church and their parents have deserted them.

Psychological

Many people have experienced unspeakable horrors and several are traumatized. Many people were killed, many fled, and lost loved ones. There are many widows and orphans, and they are often traumatized ('screaming in broad daylight', was sometimes mentioned). Many people were abducted, especially young women, and children. The ones that escaped have to process their experiences, and are often regarded with mistrust by the community and/or family. The relatives of the people that have been abducted live between hope and fear. People still live under the threat of attack and they feel the government has abandoned them.

Economic

During and after the peak of attacks, people had no access to their own land, due to lack of security. Therefore they have not been able to cultivate their farms and sow their seeds, so they have missed the possibility to harvest; this has happened for several years already. Often they do not have the necessary tools and are lacking seeds. Many shops were destroyed or businesses ruined, and people lack the financial means to restart their businesses.

3.2.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Borno State

Spiritual

Pastors need knowledge and skills on how to comfort their members, and how to support especially widows and orphans. Pastors need teachings on holistic ministry. The church needs teachings on forgiveness and how to reach out in love to their Muslims neighbours.

Physical

Food is mentioned as the first need; shelter/housing is also a concern; water points and boreholes need to be restored. Schools have been closed for years, and young people need education.

Social

There is mistrust: Christians need to learn to trust one another and non-Christians. Reconciliation and community building is needed. Programmes to reintegrate young people back in their communities are needed.

²⁹ See: <http://www.unocha.org/story/five-things-know-about-crisis-nigeria>, last accessed 8 June 2017.

Psychological

There is urgent need for trauma care for all Christians, but specifically for widows, people that have been abducted, and orphans. Trainers in trauma care need to be trained to reach out to others.

Economic

There is a need for ways to rebuild people's lives, especially start-ups for widows and seeds for farmers. Vocational training for the youth is needed.

3.3 Adamawa State

3.3.1 Introduction

Adamawa State has been hit by both Boko Haram and Fulani militants, and the attacks are clearly aimed at Christians; interviewees also mentioned attacks by soldiers. There is a state of impunity, especially for Muslim Fulani, and Islamization is a concern. The situation in Adamawa State has been harsh. As outlined in the February 2017 press release mentioned in Section 2, more than 3,000 people were killed, and over 400 churches, 5,000 shops and businesses, and 160,000 houses looted and destroyed. About 1,200,000 people fled to the city of Yola, to IDP-camps, and to host communities; most Christians were staying with relatives. This hinders access to relief that is distributed in the official camps. However, staying in these camps is also not easy for the Christians (where there is discrimination and no freedom to worship) so they prefer to stay outside the official camps. They state that they are being discriminated during aid relief anyway.

The situation has calmed down a bit in Adamawa and many people have returned to their villages, under some pressure from the government, as some camps have been dismantled. Some people prefer to stay in the LGA-headquarter towns, as in the villages there is no food, no shelter, no security, no clean water etc. In other places people go down to their farms during the day, but sleep 'in the mountains'. Some people live in tents or huts in their home town, as their own house or land has been seized. People have returned to different types of villages, whether Christians were the majority (for instance 90%) or the minority (35%). There are villages, though, that have been completely destroyed and people have simply fled for good.

Also, youth leaders reported that the impact of the violence on the youth is enormous: Some girls resort to prostitution; boys start stealing or using/selling drugs; others become Muslims; pastors will have to deal with the youth that wants to retaliate.

3.3.2 Situation of Christians in Adamawa State

Spiritual

People shared that church life has been changed by the insurgencies. There is fear and people have become discouraged; the faith of many has grown cold; the population of the Christians has reduced as many have fled and not yet returned; there are less services, evangelism has reduced; Muslims are seen as enemies. Christians have been demoralized; they have lost hope

and are afraid to show and share their faith, especially when they live in minority areas. Some Christians started occult practices or went back to ATR, in the hope that this can protect them from bullets or other violence.

Tension is decreasing, however, and people are starting church activities again. Preaching has also changed: Before the insurgencies, themes were often focussed on love, prosperity and fellowship; now preaching focusses on hope, reconciliation, encouragement and holiness. Some previously nominal Christians have become fervent believers, and the fact that Christians do not retaliate has caused some Muslims to convert to Christianity. Though some members left the church, the spiritual life of many Christians has grown positively. People who survived the hardships, for instance while fleeing or hiding in the forest, expressed that they had learned to trust God more than ever. Four young women from Mubi who had been in the hands of Boko Haram for some weeks, shared that they had felt the presence of God during their hardship; their faith has grown, their spiritual life had received a boost. The testimony and example of these women encouraged others. However, other women shared that they have spiritual problems because they suffered abuses and because their husbands died. Some women cannot come to church for fellowship (out of security), and have lost the love for the church and for one another. The church is trying to make a positive impact in the life of the members, trauma care is given in some churches, and members try to reach out to others. There is no focus on spiritual well-being for children.

Individual Christians and pastors realize they were not prepared for the insurgencies. It was mentioned that many among the youth do not agree with the teaching of the church and have stopped going as they want to take revenge.

Physical

People's basic needs are not being met. During food distributions Christians are being discriminated against, while they were the ones that were most targeted during the attacks. Food security is also an issue in the villages. Lack of drinking water is also still a concern, as most boreholes were damaged by Boko Haram. Some boreholes or water points have been restored, mainly in Muslim dominated areas, but Christians have no access to them. There is lack of resources and personnel at the government clinics which have been rebuilt, or people do not have the money to pay the bills.

There are no schools in the camps. In the villages some schools are available (government schools), but they lack CRK teachers. Private schools are too expensive. Sunday school: There is a need for more training for youth leaders especially in the villages.

Social

Some families have split up because family members fled in different directions during the attacks. Some family members died and some got divorced. The situation is especially bad for orphans, as they are sometimes completely on their own and very vulnerable. There is tension between husbands and wives, as men find it difficult not to be able to provide for their families. However, others shared that relationships within families have deepened. Relationships between Muslims and Christians in the villages are still very bad, although there are some

positive testimonies. People state ‘that they need to love their enemies’ but in practice this is difficult. There is fear and lack of trust from both sides. Christians are still being targeted, which makes life hard, and reconciliation difficult. Muslims are afraid that Christians will retaliate because the Muslims killed their families. In many cities where Christians are a majority, Muslims still have most leadership positions in society, which is hard for Christians to accept. Many Christians feel vulnerable because of lack of security and encourage the establishment of vigilante groups and ‘hunter associations’.

Psychological

Long-term effects of the violence have become visible: There are people with serious mental problems, some of whom have become violent towards family members; children are traumatized as well. There is a lack of understanding about trauma, also among pastors, and they are not equipped to deal with it. Some people have lost hope and become depressed. Sexual violence is also a huge issue. There is a stigma and victims are afraid to speak up. They have difficulty in starting again with their life. Especially widows suffer from men that offer services in exchange for sexual favors. The church knows about it but does not speak out. Soldiers often force (young) women into sexual relations and go unpunished.

Economic

People have lost shops, land, tools, and it is difficult to build up their work and business, especially because most people are looking after relatives and cannot save money to start their business. 90% of the shops that were burned down were owned by Christians; NEMA did rebuild some shops, but refused to give them back, as the owners could not hand over property documents (that were burned), and the shops were given, or sold for a low price, to Muslims. Properties that were rented by Christians were given to others.

Since so many women have become widows, or because women lack their original ways to sustain themselves (farming), they look for skill acquisition e.g. sewing, small businesses. Women that have gone back to the villages try to provide for their families by getting firewood from the bush and selling it, but farmers cannot go back to their farms as these are outside the village. People want to start dry-season farming (next to their house), because they lost the rain season but they do not have seeds. Fulani have let their cows graze on crops and destroyed about 500 farms. In several LGA’s fisherman were shot at by Fulani, so they have been forced to stop fishing. There are no employment nor vocational training possibilities for the youth.

3.3.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Adamawa State

Spiritual

Youth and women need special attention. The church needs teachings on persecution preparedness and awareness on Gender Based Violence (GBV). Pastors and other church leaders lack resources and skills. Especially in the villages with a Muslim majority Christians need encouragement and teachings on forgiveness, reconciliation.

Physical

Food security is still an issue in the villages. Boreholes and water points need to be restored. In some places clinics need to be rebuilt. Training of CRK teachers and Sunday school teachers is needed. Many young people have no access to schools.

Social

Christians need teaching on family life as there is a lot of tension. There are many orphans and widows and marital relationships are under strain. Teaching on reconciliation (between Muslims and Christians) is needed, especially in the villages.

Psychological

There is a very urgent need for trauma counselling. The youth needs special care: Trauma seminars or other youth activities. Awareness on GBV is needed, and care and support for victims of GBV is needed.

Economic

Adults (men and women) and young people need skill acquisition and vocational training. People need assistance to restart their businesses, and the skills and tools to be able to start new jobs.

3.4 Taraba State

3.4.1 Introduction

The perpetrators of violence in Taraba were mainly Fulani herdsmen. However, in interviews the perpetrators were often described as “guys on motor bikes with guns”, so it is hard to distinguish them from Boko Haram members. Maybe because Boko Haram was not ‘officially’ involved here, or because the media hesitates to address the Fulani attacks, the region did not get much attention from NGOs.³⁰ People in Taraba hardly received any help and they are devastated, traumatized and abandoned. The interviews with the women and youth were especially heart-breaking, where relatives had been killed or abducted, their houses and crops destroyed. Many were hungry and traumatized and would still sleep out in the field expecting new attacks. ‘Fear’ is a word that came back during many of the meetings and interviews. People even mistrust NGOs as there is often an Islamic agenda behind their aid programmes. Interviewees mentioned that ‘things are relatively peaceful’ now, although there are still attacks. Although one would expect that only farms would be targeted, many churches were also destroyed in the region.

3.4.2 The situation of Christians in Taraba State

Spiritual

The interviewed Christians feel devastated, left alone and discouraged, and the insurgencies have shattered the faith of the church members. In several villages girls have become Muslims because they were offered food; others (mainly youth) have turned to ATR out of despair and hoping for protection (against bullets and other violence). Many people stopped going to church

³⁰ See: <http://guardian.ng/news/scores-killed-in-taraba-as-fulani-herdsmen-attack-villages/>, last accessed 8 June 2017.

out of fear. During the interviews in the villages it was shared several times that the Christians have 'hatred' towards Muslims and the Fulani. The church on state level is not united, which makes matters worse: there is infighting within denominations, and between denominations. Some refugees were refused help by churches, because they were members of another denomination. On the other hand, other people shared that the persecution is also bringing Christians together.

Physical

There is severe food insecurity. Fulani sent their cows to the fields to eat the crops during harvest time. Poverty hinders people from returning to normal life in the village as they have no seeds and tools have been destroyed. There is also a lack of clean water - some drink directly from the stream where Fulani let their cattle drink. People lack healthcare facilities and security, so that in many villages people still 'sleep in the field'. People are too afraid to send their children to school. Apart from that, often they cannot afford to send them. Private schools are expensive, while government (= Muslim) schools are affordable. There is an opportunity for Christians to teach CRK (Christian Religious Knowledge) in state schools, but neither the government nor the school pay for it.

Social

Although Muslims are the minority in the state, most community leaders are Muslims, thus hindering the input and freedom of Christians. Chiefs hand out 'indigene-letters' (documents of 'legal citizenship') to Muslims, even to people from neighboring states or countries, but refuse to give them to local Christians. Christian leaders in society are often replaced by Muslims. Fear has paralyzed people in the communities, as people are being confronted with Fulani in daily life, which brings back memories and makes them feel very tense and hateful. Families face many challenges: Marriages suffer tension and there are many widows and orphans. Young people want to retaliate and pastors find it difficult to reach their heart.

Psychological

Many people live in fear and show signs of severe trauma. People shared that many are depressed; some stopped talking and others are 'constantly talking in themselves'; some 'have gone mad'. In Taraba State, the danger is still very much present that an attack may come at any moment. Several times it was mentioned that people feel vulnerable. There is also a state of lawlessness. For instance, the police refuse to accept orders from the governor, as he is not a Muslim.

Economic

Some people have access to their land, others do not. Some mentioned that their land was sold to the Fulani, others (in Muslim dominated areas) sold their land at a low price. People stated that they are afraid to work on their farms, to go fishing, to travel, to fetch water (for the women). In other ways they are targeted, 'squeezed', and abused because of their poverty: Fulani ask poor families to release a son for cattle herding in exchange for money. This is in fact a form of slavery and the boy is then 'groomed' by them; poor girls are being lured into marriage or abducted; some people are promised a job if they become a Muslim; Muslims lend money under certain conditions (through the Gaiz Bank). Some women are prostituting themselves to be able to provide for their children. During interviews with some refugees, it was noted that

some could neither read nor write, and this was not even listed as being a need. However, literacy is a main issue if women want to become independent and provide for their families. Former farmers lack any other skills and opportunities to be able to provide for their families.

3.4.3 Expressed needs of the Christians in Taraba State

Spiritual

There is a need for awareness training on unity, discipleship, persecution preparedness, but also the need to love one's enemy. Pastors need to be taught on servant leadership. Youth needs special attention.

Physical

Needs are: food, shelter, access to clean water (boreholes), school fees and schools, (maternity) clinics, loans for fertilizers, education, literacy classes for adults, Sunday school material, training for Sunday school teachers.

Social

The following areas of teaching are needed: Teaching on love, forgiveness and reconciliation; teaching on marriage (since relationships between husbands and wives are tense and men do not know how to tend to the physical needs of the family); teaching on relationships between parents and children; teaching on how to help young people who want to retaliate.

Psychological

There is an urgent need for both trauma counselling and marriage and family counselling. Presence ministry is also important to let Christians know that they are not forgotten.

Economic

Skill acquisition for adults (men and women) and youth. Training for men to improve farming. Vocational training for youth in the villages. There are no Christian associations for workers.

4 Summary

The situation in northeastern Nigeria is dire. Years of Boko Haram insurgencies have led i) to a massive displacement of people, ii) to food insecurity (as land cannot be farmed) and iii) to disruption of social and economic life. Despite the government's claim that Boko Haram has been defeated, and although Boko Haram has indeed been forced into retreat in several places, attacks are still going on. The population is slowly and cautiously trying to return to their villages - where security allows – in an attempt to rebuild their lives and livelihood. The Northeast has a large Christian population which has suffered most from the attacks by Boko Haram and Muslim Fulani herdsmen. At the same time, they have been experiencing ongoing discrimination in the provision of basic services and relief aid.

In order to get a better view on the situation of Christians in the Northeast a basic assessment of the situation was made in 35 villages in four states of north-eastern Nigeria: Yobe, Borno, Adamawa and Taraba states. The basic objective was to observe what is currently happening and to identify the needs of Christians who have returned or wish to return to their home villages, thus making it possible to provide ideas and recommendations for future interventions (not included in this paper). The summary of the needs has been divided in five categories, as in the previous chapters.

Spiritual

- Christians in all four states (Yobe, Borno, Adamawa and Taraba) need encouragement, and the mere fact of visiting them is a sign that God has not forgotten them: Presence ministry is very important.
- Christians need teachings on how to remain strong in their faith and live as Christians in a hostile environment.
- Pastors need knowledge about 1) discipleship 2) holistic ministry and 3) how to support the most needy in their churches.
- Special attention needs to be given to the youth: Many are leaving the churches because they are attracted to ATR (for protection) or are filled with hatred and want to retaliate.
- In general, the number of church members has dropped, which is due to the fact that many people became refugees. Church attendance has decreased, and people have left the church because they were either discouraged or afraid: This is a general tendency.
- It seems that once people pick up the pieces of their life and testimonies of God's faithfulness are being shared, that church members become more united, and that they indicate that their spiritual life has been strengthened. This happened for instance in Adamawa and Borno states.
- Thousands of churches have been destroyed, either partly or completely.³¹ Reconstruction of church buildings has been difficult as church income has decreased, because many Christians cannot provide for their own families, let alone for the IDPs they are often hosting.

³¹ Accurate numbers of destroyed churches are currently not available.

- When pastors had to flee or when their properties were burned, they lost their Bibles and theological books. Church members lost their Bibles and when churches were burned Bibles, hymn books and other objects were destroyed.

Physical

- Christians in all states indicated that food insecurity is a huge and urgent problem. Security is still a major concern; people have returned to many villages when it was safe, but it depends on the local situation, and they run the risk that violence will return any day.
- Shelter and reconstruction of homes is the next concern: as soon as the situation is deemed safe people will return, but are often confronted with a lack of basic building materials, such as roofing. In all states, depending on the situation per city or village, access to (clean) water is another concern: bore holes and water points need to be restored.
- A lot of schools have been destroyed and school systems are not functioning because of the lack of teachers, as many fled or were killed. A lack of CRK teachers is often mentioned.

Social

- There are many orphans and widows who need special care.
- The violence increased religious tension which has led to segregation in the four states, and separate areas were thus formed for Christians and Muslims who used to live next to each other. This differs per state, and per city or village, but in general Christians in Muslim dominated areas suffer more discrimination than elsewhere. Christians in all states live in constant fear of new attacks, but especially in Taraba and Yobe Christians feel vulnerable.
- Christians in Taraba State wrestle with feelings of hatred.
- Reconciliation and community building is needed. Many young people have been abducted, are ex-soldiers or are having to act as the head of their families: Programmes are needed to reintegrate youth back into their communities.
- Positive examples of forgiveness and reconciliation could be used to propagate unity within communities. The church is not aware of its potential and should be taught to be a light in these dark times, and should focus on love and community. Churches shared that families are vulnerable but can be a source of strength as well.
- Men feel often vulnerable as they cannot provide for their families and have not been able to protect their families. Relationships between husbands and wives as well as with children are often damaged, teaching is needed on this.

Psychological

- The most pressing and urgent need for Christians is trauma care as many of them are severely traumatized. Pastors and other church leaders need trauma care in the first place, as they are leading others and they are constantly confronted with the need of others, which makes them vulnerable for vicarious trauma.
- Church members need to be selected and trained to be able to give counselling in their churches.

- Since so many women have been abducted or have experienced sexual violence, they need special care. The church needs awareness on GBV, especially in the Sharia states and in communities with a Muslim majority.
- Young people and children need special attention as many of them are traumatized.

Economic

- People are eager to return to their villages, and many have returned already, but it is hard to get back into the routine of normal life. Many people lack the means to sustain their family as their shops, lands, harvest, and tools have been destroyed and there is not enough security to make a restart.
- Often people need to learn new skills as they cannot go back to their former occupation. Vocational training (skill acquisition) and loans for young people (and widows) is a huge need.

Appendix: Assessment Data

State	LGA's (Local Government Area)	Villages visited	Inhabitants #	Christians (%)	Returnees (%)	# Families, Widows, Orphans	# Houses/ Shops/Churches vandalized
Adamawa	Demsa (2x)	Kodomun	6.000	95%	majority	- lot of widows (30) - no orphans	houses: 23 houses of pastors: 4
		Kwajine	3.020	100%	60%	- no widows - 10 orphans	houses: 250 (100%) shops 4 churches: 2
	Michika (2x)	Mbororo, Garta, Ngeri, Magw garta kassa	215.000	99%	90%	- widows: 20 - widowers: 10 - orphans: 30 - abducted: some	houses: 2.600 (burned/ vandalized) shops: 200 (burned/ vandalized) churches: 30 (burned/ vandalized)
		Kobrososhosho: kura, kubi, stanza, thuri, kwazale, che	500.000	100%	90%	- widows: 300 - widowers: 200 - orphans: 600 - abducted: some	houses: 3.000 (burned/ vandalized) shops: 100 (burned/ vandalized) churches: 20 (burned/ vandalized)
	Madagali (2x)	Vemgo: ndigau, vurokotuko, ghabath, alama, hidik, ghumsi, cheklek, makshik, ngemango	3.000	99%	30%	- widows: 68 - widowers: 38 - orphans: 220 - abducted: some	houses: 2.100 (burned/ vandalized) shops: 80 (burned/ vandalized) churches: 42 (100%) (burned/ vandalized)
		Koppa	200.000	95%	85%	- widows: 200 - widowers: 30 - orphans: 2000	houses: 143 (burned) shops: 20 (burned/ vandalized) churches: 20 (burned/ vandalized)
	Hong (2x)	Garaha	4.500	95%	90%	- widows: 35-40 - widowers: 10-15 - orphans: 150 - 200	houses: 670-800 (80%) shops: 10 - 15 churches: 4 (100%) health center of LCCn was burned
		Gashala Kufum	7.500	99%	85%	about 10% of the christians are widow/ widows/ orphans, 7 people killed	house: 1
	Gombi (2x)	Gaada	45.000	80%	80%	there several families that are scattered as a result of the attacks.	houses: 107
		Garkida	15.500	85%	85%	there are widows, widowers and orphans	houses: 300 shops: 5 - 100 churches: 15
	Girie (2x)	Koh Girei	5.000	90%	85%	- widows: 73 - widowers: 58 - orphans: 76	houses: 80% churches: 2
		Gorong	5.000	100%	90%	- widows: 42 - widowers: 57 - orphans: 49	none
	Mubi North	Muva	1.500	95%	95%	- widow: 13	church: 9 (all) houses: ?? (80%) shops: 67
		Mujara	2.350	65%	almost all	families are intact	church: 7 burned
	Mubi South	Sahuda	1.300	65%	almost everybody	families are intact, no people killed	church: 5 burned

(continued on next page)

	Mubi South	Buladega	1.500	35%	almost everybody	- widow: 1	churches: 3 shops: 3 (looted)	
	Maiha	Paka	10.000	30%	almost everybody	- widows: 5 - orphans: 18	church: 8 burned houses: 13 shops: 13	
		Wuroladde	2.050	35%	almost everybody	families are intact, no people killed	none	
	Borno	Chibok (2x)	Peni	1.000	99%	98%	families are intact	none
Mbalala			3.400	99%	almost all	many widows and orphans	none	
Hawul (2x)		Kirbutu	-	-	-	-	-	
Taraba	Zing (2x)	Dindin	53.000	95%	NA			
		Monkin	46.000	90%	NA	- some are intact, while majority in women fellowship are widowed: 200 - widowers: 50 - orphans: 100	house: 1 (chief)	
	Lau (2x)	Jimlani	4.566	75%	75%	- widows: 36 - widowers: 7 - orphans: 42	church: 1 burned and 1 vandalized houses: all	
		Garin Dogo	10.000	60%	70% except for the people whose houses were burned	- widows: 68 - widowers: 29 - orphans: 22	houses: 300 (burned), 200 (vandalized) shops: 3 churches: 2	
	Wukari (2x)	Gidan Doruwa	5.000	99%	0%	- widows: 20 - orphans: 40	all churches: 25 all houses: no numbers	
		Sondi	8.000	95%	94%	- widows: 33 - orphans: 200+ - widow 1	houses: 50 shops: 5 churches: 5	
	Bali (2x)	Jatau	15.000	98%	65%	- widows: 10 - orphans: 52	church: 1 vandalized church: 3 burned houses: uncountable	
		Nahuta	380	95%	80%	- widows: 5 - orphans: 13	shops: 200 + (complete village) churches: 33 +	
	Takum (2x)	Garn Ahmadu	8.000	90%	5%	- widows: 10 - orphans: 200 +	houses: uncountable shops: uncountable churches: 6	
		Kashumbila	10.000	80%	20%	- widows: 1 - orphans: 1	houses: 1.000 + shops: 500 + churches: 100 +	
	Yobe	Damaturu (2x)	Jerusalem	3.670	90%	85%	- widows: 30 - orphans: 65	houses: 4 shops: 30 churches: 20
		Potiskum (2x)	Potiskum	8.000	60%	290	families are more limited than before - widows: 60 - orphans: 40	churches: 6 pastor houses: 6
Fika			5.000	3%	30	- widows: 1 - orphans: 3	car: 6	