



Humanitarian Aid  
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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**RETURN INTENTION SURVEY**  
**NORTH-EAST NIGERIA**  
**APRIL 2021**



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## 1. KEY FINDINGS



In the BAY States (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe), 74 per cent of IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings and 65 per cent of IDPs residing among local host communities have the intention to return to their locations of origin.



In the BAY States, 17 per cent of IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings and 34 per cent of IDPs residing among local host communities stated that they did not have the intention to leave the locations where they are currently displaced in the upcoming months.



54 per cent of IDPs reported that the house in which they lived prior to their displacement was totally destroyed. 28 per cent of respondents reported that their house was partially damaged, but still repairable.



97 per cent of IDPs stated that their livelihood activities were disrupted because of their displacement. 89 per cent of the respondents believed to be able to resume their livelihood activities from before their displacement upon the return to their locations of origin.



45 per cent of the respondents declared to have conducted pendular movements between the location where they are currently displaced and their location of origin. 55 per cent of respondents stated that they have never returned to their place of origin since they have been displaced.



Food was predicted to be the primary need upon return to locations of origin according to 38 per cent of the respondents. Food was followed by shelter and security with 32 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.



The security situation in locations of origin was the determining factor in the decision making process for IDPs to return home or to remain in displacement. The improved security in locations of origin motivated the return intentions of 62 per cent of the IDPs who intended to return to their areas of origin. Contrarily, 84 per cent of the IDPs who intended to remain in displacement cited that the security situation in displacement is better than in locations of origin.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

The displacement situation in the conflict-affected northeastern region of Nigeria is highly complex. Although the violence generated by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) remains the main driver of displacement by large numbers, climate change is exacerbating existing tensions and nourishes communal clashes and conflict. The region is also significantly exposed to natural disasters such as large-scale floods. The escalation of the violence in 2014 resulted in a multidimensional humanitarian crisis and mass displacement across the region. Seven years later, north-east Nigeria continues to host large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees.

To better understand the scope of displacement and to assess the needs of the affected populations, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Nigeria Office, in collaboration with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and relevant State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), commenced its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) programme in September 2014. The main objective of the DTM programme is to provide support to the Government and humanitarian partners by establishing a comprehensive system that collects and analyses data, and disseminates information on IDPs and returnees in order to ensure effective and timely assistance to the affected populations. The DTM is implemented at several geographical and administrative levels to obtain the most accurate information possible. This includes at the levels of the Local Government Areas (LGAs), wards and villages.

As part of its DTM programme, IOM Nigeria has incorporated a Return Intention Survey (RIS) that was conducted at household level in the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. While new displacements continue to occur across the region, it is noted that an increasing number of IDPs and refugees have returned to their locations of origin. As per Round 35 of DTM assessments in north-east Nigeria, 1,742,907 returnees were identified, confirming the increasing trend towards return movements. Considering the growing numbers of returnees in the region, IOM deemed necessary to assess the return intentions of individuals who are currently still displaced in order to provide reintegration assistance to those who already have returned to their areas of origin, as well as to those who intend to return in the near future.

This report aims to provide accurate and reliable information on the return intentions of IDPs residing both in camps/camp-like settings and among host communities, in order to ensure a safe and dignified return movement and to allow the Government and humanitarian partners to effectively assist displaced populations in north-east Nigeria to achieve a durable solution. By presenting information on future intentions, often influenced by the security situation in locations of origin and the search for livelihood opportunities, this report attempts to provide a better understanding of the decision-making process of internally displaced individuals with regards to a future return home, and the conditions necessary for the return movement to be sustainable.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

The Return Intention Survey (RIS) was conducted through a household questionnaire from 14 December 2020 to 31 March 2021 in 48 Local Government Areas (LGAs) hosting IDPs in the states Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY States) in northeastern Nigeria.

A total of 6,747 IDP households responded to the questionnaire. Of these, 3,380 households (or 50%) were IDP households who were living in camp/camp-like settings, while 3,367 households (50%) were IDP households who were residing among host communities. The survey was conducted in 611 locations, situated in 189 wards across the region. Of the assessed locations, 344 were locations where IDPs were hosted among the local communities, while 267 were camps/camp-like settings. To match the ratio of displacement per state, sixty-six per cent of the assessed households were located in Borno State, 21 per cent were located in Adamawa State and 13 per cent were located in Yobe State. The respondents that participated in the survey were randomly selected from the displaced population living in the locations surveyed, with 40 per cent of the selected households being female headed households. Before participation, the voluntary nature and the objectives of the survey were clearly explained to the respondents.

To ensure the accuracy of the data collection, the survey of displaced households was conducted by trained IOM DTM enumerators and in close collaboration with the administrative authorities of the respective locations.

### 4. LIMITATIONS

The difficulties that affected the data collection were predominantly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the security situation in the locations of displacement and the poor network in the areas where the assessments took place.

Few of the respondents were willing to comply with the social distancing measures in order to prevent the spread of the virus, minimizing the risks of COVID-19. Enumerators had to be selective of the households to whom they presented the questionnaire and had to make sure that they were willing to comply with the social distancing measures.

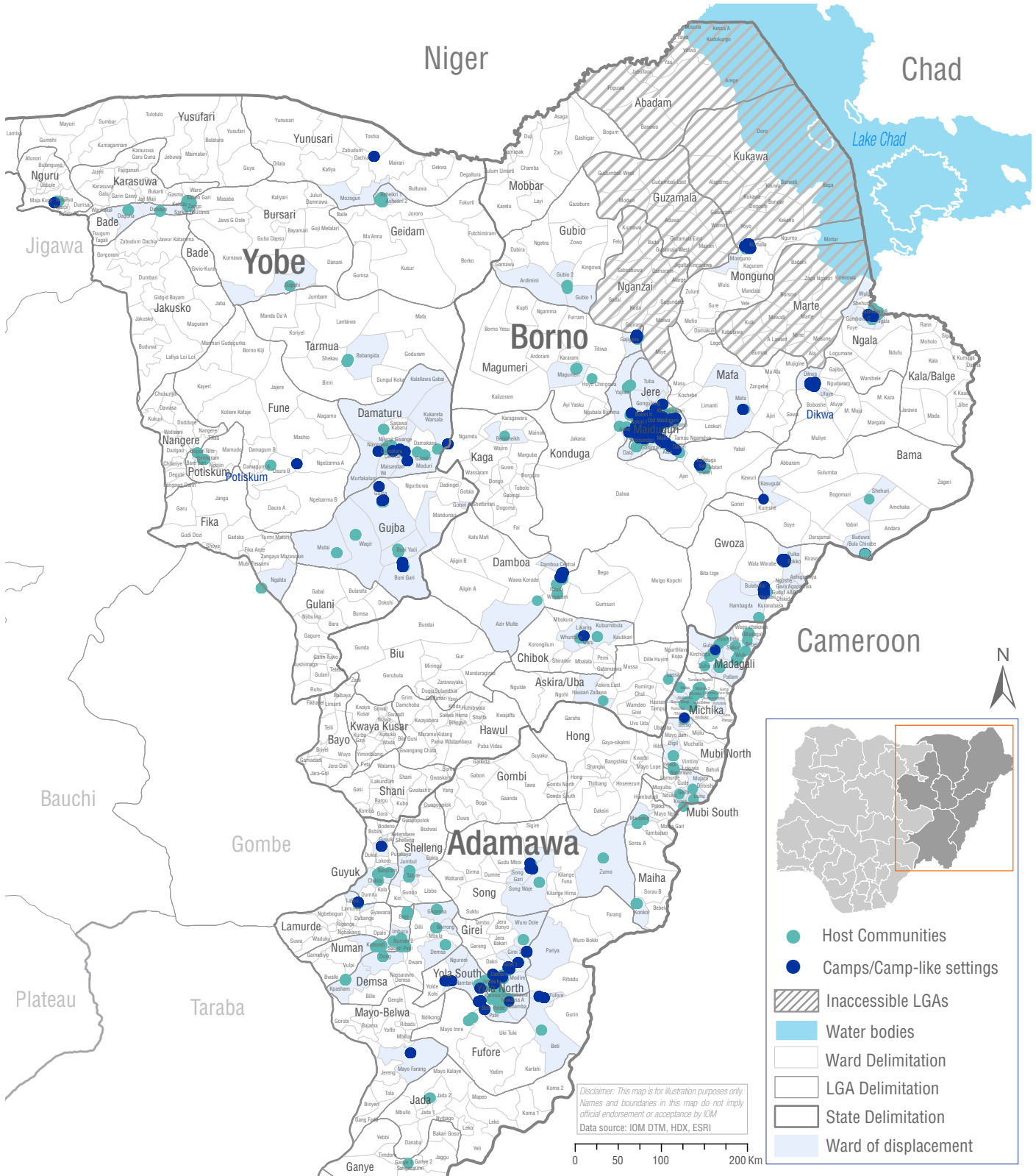
Secondly, due to the poor and unstable network in a number of assessment locations, especially in areas that are hard to reach, a delay was caused in uploading the data to the server which prolonged the timeframe of the assessment in Borno State.

As attacks are frequent in some of the areas of the assessment, enumerators were ought to be very vigilant and in situations where attacks occurred or there were rumours of attacks, data collection activities were suspended and postponed to a later and safer date. This inevitably had an effect on the timeline of the assessment.

As a result of insecurity, the LGAs Gubio and Kaga in Borno State remained inaccessible during the entire timespan of the RIS, and locations in Meleri Ward in Yobe State were replaced by displacement sites in Bunigari Ward, both located in Gujba LGA.



## 5. ASSESSMENT AREA



## 6. BEFORE DISPLACEMENT

### Shelter

Ninety-one per cent of the heads of the surveyed households in north-east Nigeria stated that they owned the house in which they resided before they were displaced. Five per cent of respondents lived in a house that was owned by a relative or a family member and four per cent of the respondents said that they were tenants.

Fifty-eight per cent of the displaced households specified that the houses in which they lived before they were displaced were made out of mud. Sixteen per cent of the respondents stated that their houses were made out of bricks while 8 per cent of the IDP households lived in makeshift houses before they were displaced. The houses of 18 per cent of the IDP households were made out of mixtures of wood and mud, or bricks and mud.

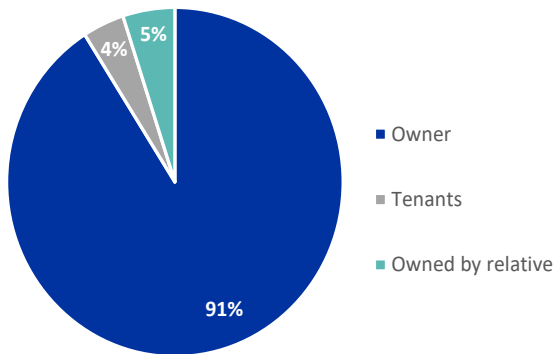


Figure 1: House ownership before displacement

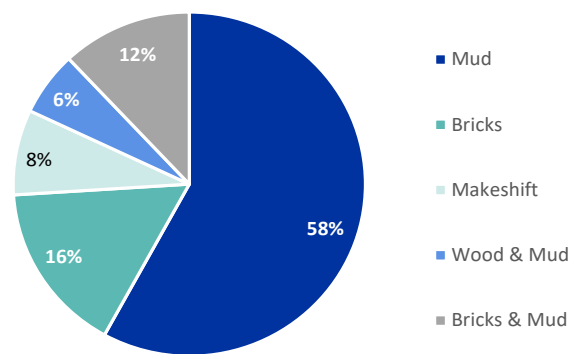


Figure 2: Type of house before displacement

IDP households residing in host communities and camps/camp-like settings across north-east Nigeria were asked about the current state of the house in which they were living before they were forced to flee their locations of origin. Fifty-four per cent of respondents reported that the house in which the household lived prior to their displacement was totally burnt or destroyed. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents reported that their house was partially burnt or damaged, but still repairable. Six per cent of respondents stated that their houses were not damaged at all and for 12 per cent of the respondents, the current state of their house in their location of origin was unknown.

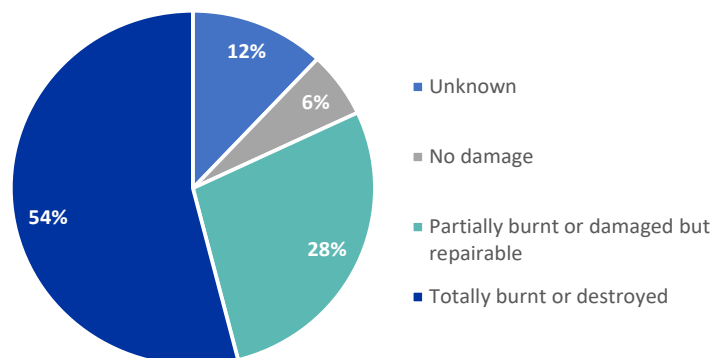


Figure 3: State of house in location of origin





## Livelihoods

The IDPs currently displaced across north-east Nigeria were employed in a variety of different sectors prior to their displacement. Thirty-three per cent of surveyed households stated that they were farmers, and 26 per cent of respondents said that they were active in agro pastoralism. Twenty-three per cent of the IDPs earned a living through petty trading while 5 per cent were pastoralists prior to their displacement. Six per cent of IDPs were daily labourers and 3 per cent were fishermen.

It is important to note that in 97 per cent of the surveys, the respondents stated that the access to their livelihood activities was disrupted because of the displacement. Only 3 per cent of the heads of IDP households indicated that they could continue their livelihood activity despite their forced displacement.

Furthermore, 89 per cent of the respondents stated that they believed they would be able to resume their livelihood activity from prior to their displacement upon the return to their locations of origin. Meanwhile, 3 per cent of respondents said that they would not be able to resume their livelihood activity when returning home and 8 per cent did not know.

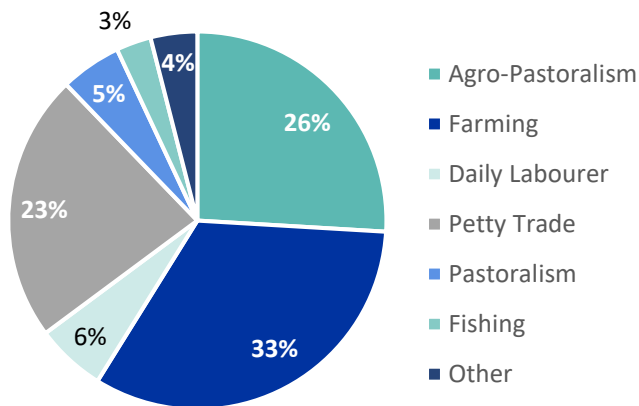


Figure 4: Livelihood activity of IDPs prior to displacement

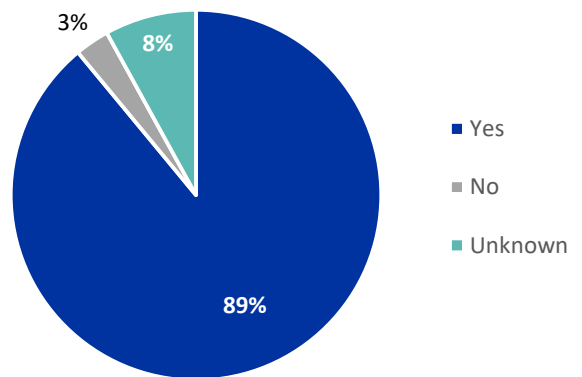


Figure 5: Resume livelihood activity upon return

## 7. DISPLACEMENT HISTORY

IOM's DTM estimates that 79 per cent of the IDPs in north-east Nigeria were displaced before the year 2017. This signifies that the great majority of IDPs in the BAY States do not find themselves in an emergency situation but are trapped in a situation of protracted displacement, characterized by a long period of exile and great uncertainty about their future. Thirteen per cent of the IDP households reported to have left their locations of origin in the year 2017, while 5 per cent were displaced in the year 2018. Three per cent of IDP households were displaced during the years 2019 and 2020, demonstrating that displacement is continuing and that violence is unabated.

Fifty per cent of IDP households in the BAY States had not been displaced before and are currently displaced for the first time. Knowing that the great majority of IDPs was displaced before 2017, it can be concluded that many households were residing in the location where the assessment took place for several years. Thirty-five per cent of the respondents reported that they have been displaced twice, while 12 per cent stated to have been displaced three times. Three per cent of the IDP households in north-east Nigeria have been displaced four times.

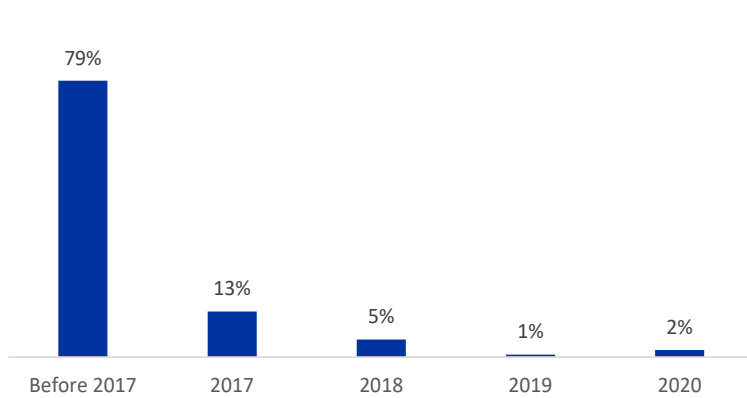


Figure 6: Year of departure from location of origin

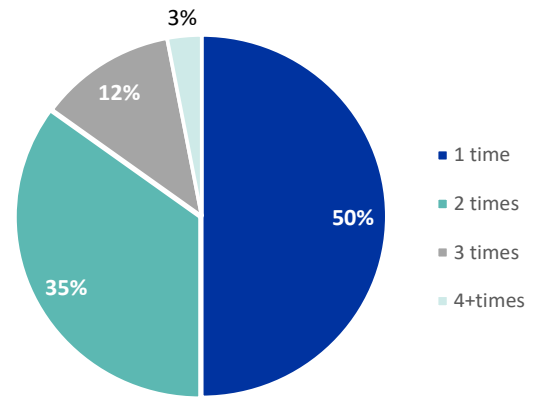


Figure 7: Number of times displaced

Forty-five per cent of the respondents declared to have travelled regularly between the location where they are currently displaced and their location of origin. Fifty-five per cent of respondents stated that they have never returned to their place of origin since they have been displaced. Of the IDPs that have visited their location of origin, 29 per cent have visited once, 38 per cent have visited twice, 15 per cent have visited three times and 18 per cent have visited four times or more.

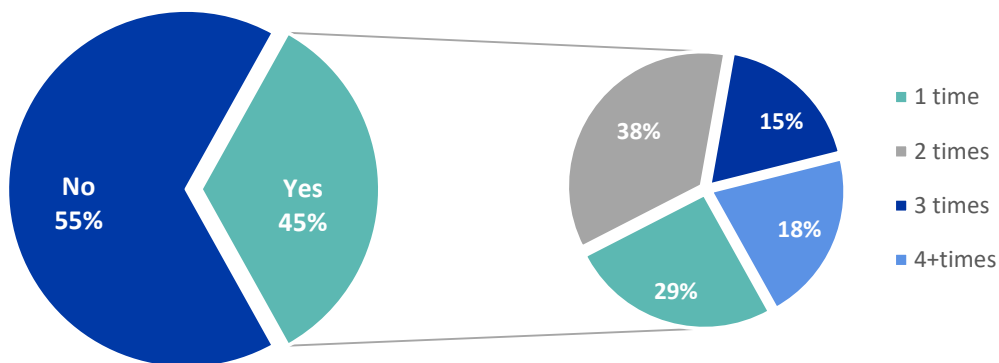


Figure 8: Percentage of IDPs that have visited their location of origin



When comparing pendular movements between IDPs who were residing in camps/camp-like settings and IDPs who were displaced among host communities, there was a notable difference in the percentage of IDPs who have visited their locations of origin. Fifty-seven per cent of the IDP households who were residing among host communities declared to have visited their location of origin, while only 34 per cent of IDPs households residing in camps/camp-like settings have travelled back and forth between the camp in which they reside and their location of origin. Because of the absence of systematic humanitarian support for IDPs who are hosted among local communities, they tend to visit their locations of origin more regularly to conduct livelihood activities or to check on living conditions and properties.

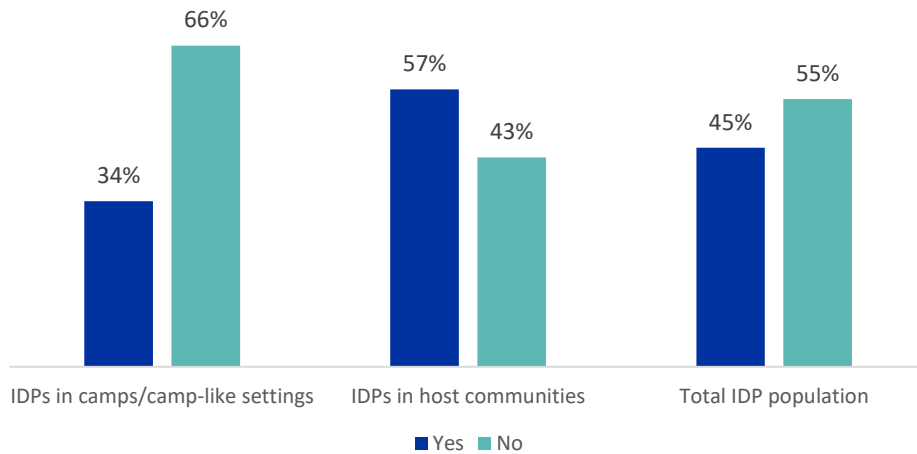


Figure 9: Pendular movements between locations of displacement and locations of origin

Pendular movements between locations of displacement and areas of origin can be motivated by a variety of different reasons. Checking on property or possessions was the most common reason for which IDPs visited their locations of origin as it was mentioned in 63 per cent of the cases. Checking on property and possessions was followed by family visits, mentioned in 46 per cent of the cases where IDPs have visited their locations of origin. Checking on living conditions in areas of origin was mentioned as a reason to visit locations of origin in 43 per cent of the cases. Furthermore, the search for humanitarian assistance and livelihood opportunities were motivating IDPs to go back and forth between their locations of displacement and their locations of origin in respectively 13 per cent and 12 per cent of the cases. Respondents were invited to give multiple answers, which explains why the total of the percentages exceeds 100 per cent.

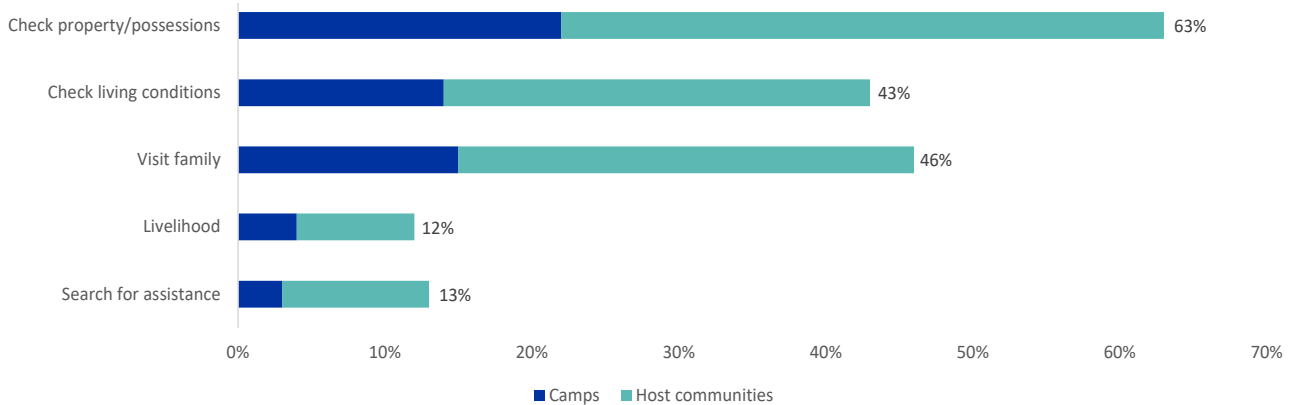
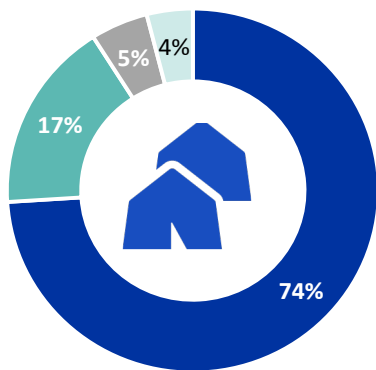


Figure 10: Reasons for which IDPs have visited their location of origin

## 8. RETURN INTENTIONS OF IDPS

According to the survey among displaced households in north-east Nigeria, the majority of IDPs expressed their intention to return to their locations of origin. For IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings, this number was higher (74%) compared to IDPs residing among host communities (65%). Remarkably, 34 per cent of IDPs that are displaced among the local host communities do not have the intention of leaving their displacement location in the upcoming months while only 17 per cent of IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings have the intention of staying in the location where they are currently displaced. Five per cent of IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings stated that they intend to move to a different location. They plan to leave the locality where they are currently residing but do not intend to return home. For IDPs residing in host communities, this is only 1 per cent.

IDPs in camps/camp-like settings



IDPs in host communities

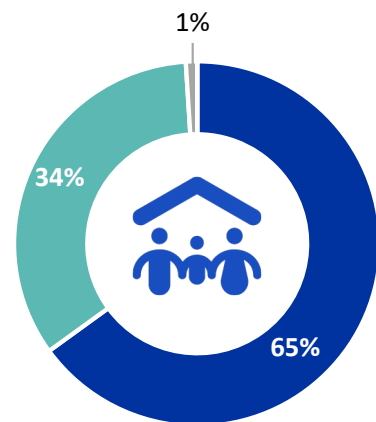
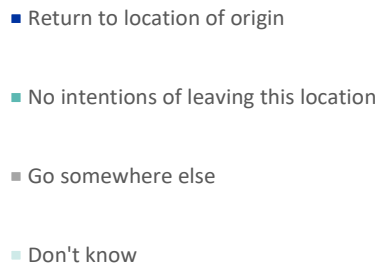


Figure 11: Return intentions of IDPs

When disaggregating the data per state of assessment, it is notable that Yobe is the only state where more respondents expressed their intention to stay in the location where they are currently residing, rather than returning to their locations of origin. More specifically, 50 per cent of respondents in Yobe (IDPs in camps/camp-like settings and host communities combined) wished to remain in the location where they currently live, while 48 per cent of respondents in Yobe intended to return home. By contrast, in the state of Borno, 76 per cent of the surveyed heads of households expressed the intention to return to their locations of origin while only 17 per cent of respondents intended to remain in displacement. The difference in future intentions per state can be explained by the efforts by the Government of Borno State to facilitate the return of IDPs to their areas of origin as planned in November 2020.

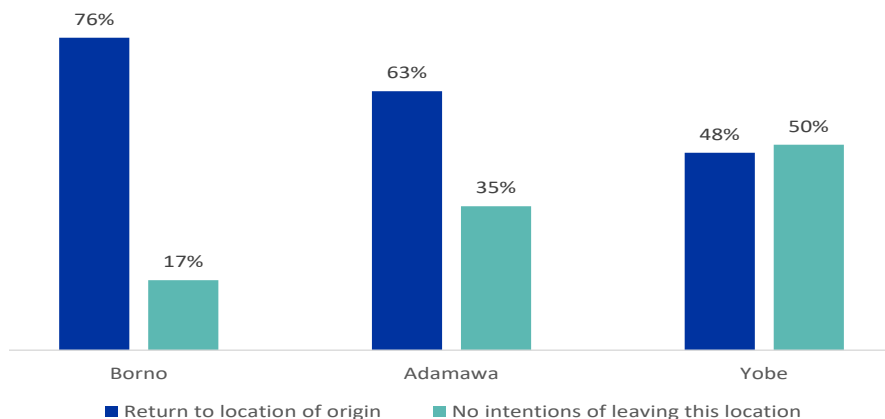


Figure 12: Future intentions of IDPs per state of assessment

## Intention to return to location of origin

When considering IDPs who planned to return to their locations of origin, no major differences were noted between IDPs who were residing in camps/camp-like settings and IDPs who were displaced among host communities. In Borno State for example, 78 per cent of IDPs in camps/camp-like settings wished to return to their locations of origin while 73 per cent of IDPs residing among host communities had similar intentions. It can be concluded that in north-east Nigeria, decisions of IDPs to return to their locations of origin after displacement are more linked to the state in which they are displaced, rather than the fact whether they are residing in a camp/camp-like settings or among host communities.

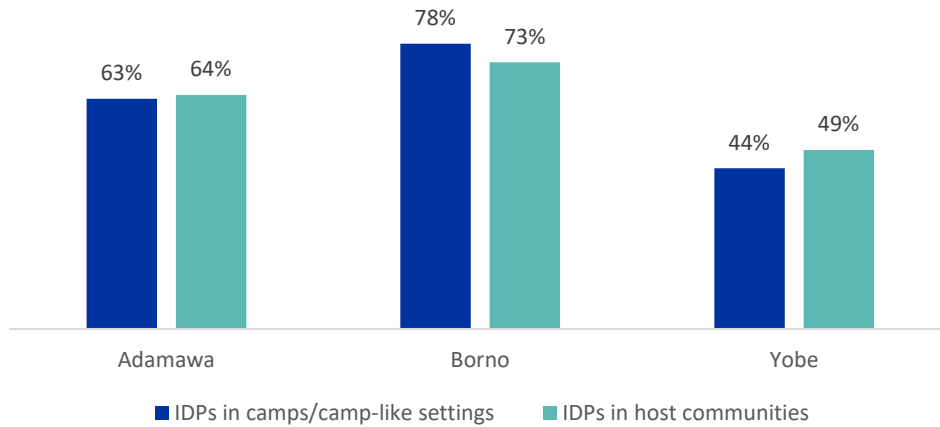


Figure 13: IDPs with the intention to return to locations of origin per state and per type

## Reasons motivating a return to locations of origin

The intentions of IDPs to return to their locations of origin were motivated by a variety of different reasons. Sixty-two per cent of the respondents who intended to return home in the foreseeable future cited the improvement of the security situation in their location of origin as the main factor motivating their return intention. Eighteen per cent of respondents wished to join family members in their area of origin, while 11 per cent cited the lack of humanitarian assistance in the location where they are currently residing as the reason why they intended to return home. The remaining 9 per cent of respondents reported the absence of livelihood opportunities in their location of displacement as the main reason motivating their return intention.

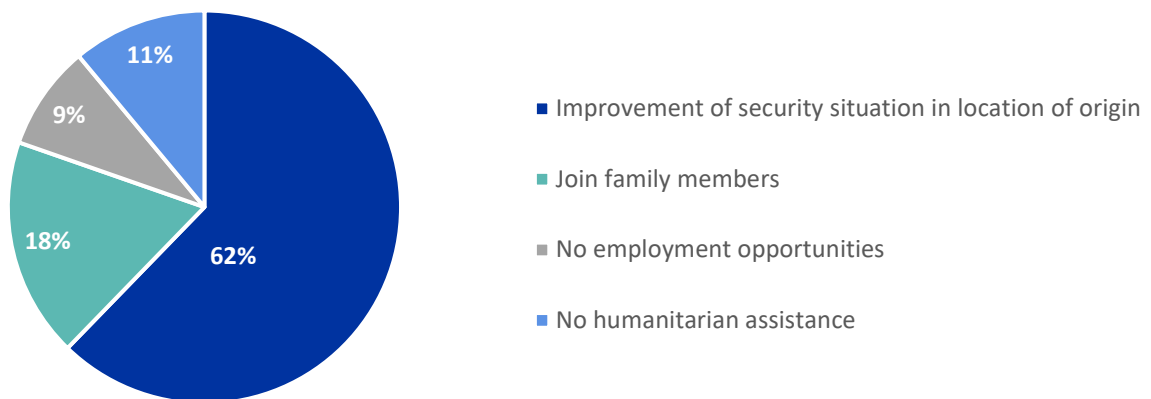


Figure 14: Reasons motivating IDPs to return to their location of origin



When disaggregating the reasons that are motivating IDPs to return to their locations of origin per settlement type, no significant distinctions were noted between IDPs residing in camps/camp-like settings and IDPs living among host communities. Sixty-six per cent of IDPs residing among host communities that intended to return to their locations of origin cited the improvement of the security situation in their area of origin as the reason to return home in the foreseeable future. For IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings, this number was recorded at 59 per cent. Because less humanitarian support is available outside of camps/camp-like settings, the reason stating ‘no humanitarian assistance in the location of displacement’ was more common with IDPs that are hosted among local communities (14%) compared to IDPs in camps/camp-like settings (7%).

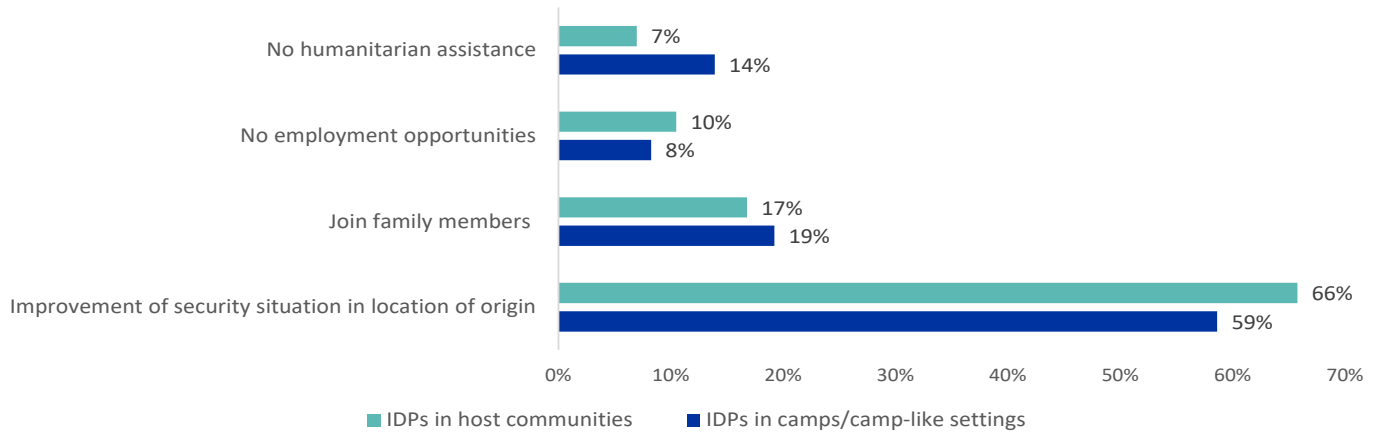


Figure 15: Reasons motivating return intentions per type of IDP

The disaggregated data per state of assessment demonstrates that, in all of the assessed states, the improvement of the security situation in locations of origin plays a major role in the decision making process of IDPs to return home. Furthermore, a higher percentage of IDPs in Adamawa State is returning to their locations of origin to join family members compared to Borno and Yobe (32% in Adamawa against 15% in Borno and Yobe States). Also, 22 per cent of IDPs in Yobe State indicated that they intend to return to their locations of origin because of a lack of employment opportunities in the location where they are displaced. Compared to Adamawa (5%) and Borno (9%) States, this is a relative high number.

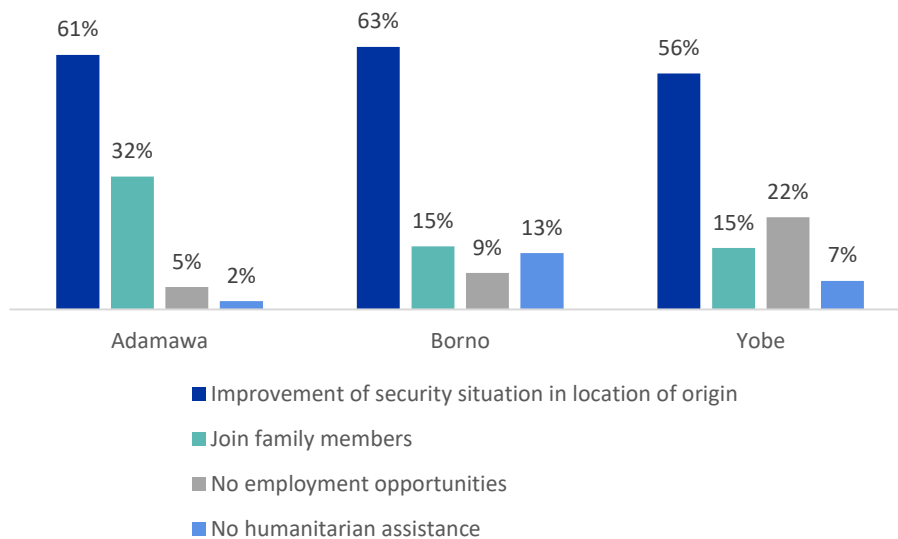


Figure 16: Reasons motivating return intentions per state of assessment

Planning of the return movement

Seventy-three per cent of respondents who intended to return to their locations of origin stated that they foresee their return movement to take place before the end of the year 2021. The survey demonstrated that the planning of a potential return movement is highly dependent on the security situation in the locations of origin. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents who intended to return home declared that they were waiting for the security situation in their home area to improve. Furthermore, 14 per cent stated that they were waiting on news from family members or friends who already have returned home, 9 per cent said that they were waiting on the return of the administration in their location of origin, 8 per cent of respondents were planning their return movement based on the agricultural calendar and 1 per cent were waiting for the re-opening of the schools in their location of origin.

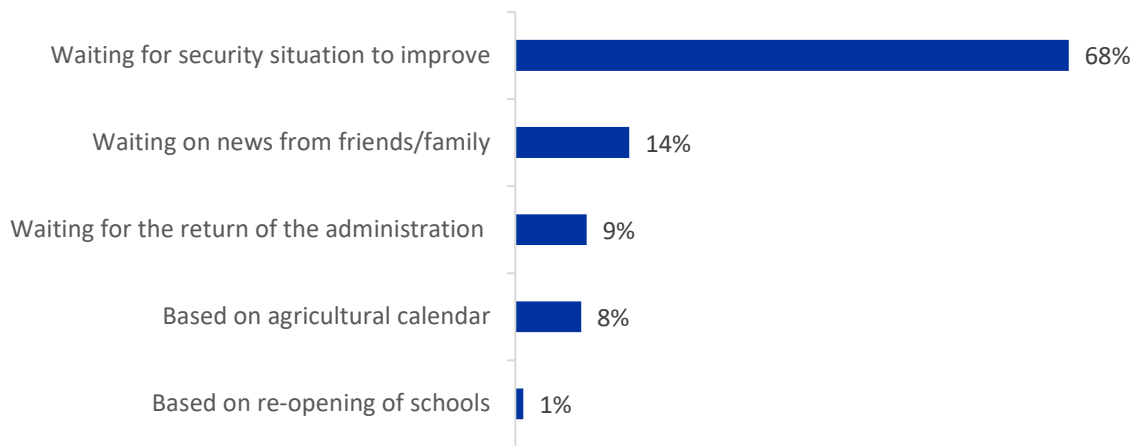


Figure 17: Reasons to plan the return movement on a specific date

Source of information

For IDP households, the return to locations of origin is generally a very difficult decision to make. The return process is often unpredictable and comes with many questions and uncertainties. Therefore, the source of information on which the decision-making process is based is of great importance. The majority or 44 per cent of IDP households base their potential decision to return home on information from the authorities and local leaders. Thirty-two per cent of IDP households consider family members and friends as their most trusted source of information. Fifteen per cent of respondents stated to base their decision to return home on visits to their locations of origin and nine per cent of respondents said to follow local news outlets.

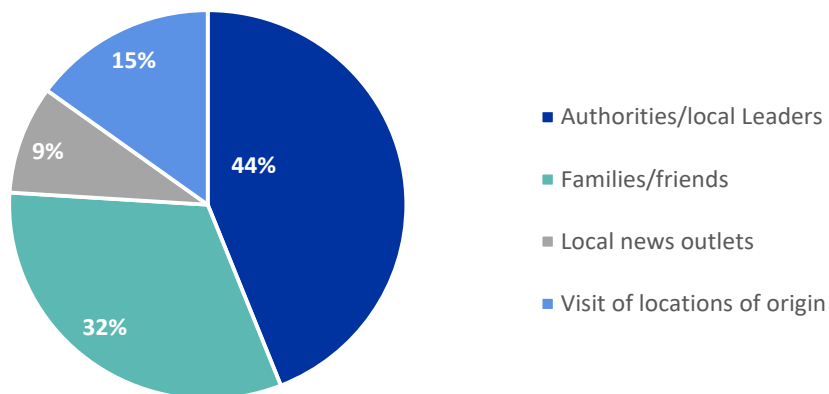


Figure 18: Must trusted source of information for IDPs



Means of travel to locations of origin

Fifty per cent of the IDP households that plan to return to their locations of origin in the foreseeable future will travel with the entire family at once. Forty-three per cent of respondents stated that a member of the family will travel alone at first and bring the family later if living conditions are favorable. Seven per cent of respondents declared that they plan to travel with some family members and bring the rest of the family later.

Furthermore, 54 per cent of the IDP households that are planning to return to their locations of origin in the foreseeable future are planning to travel with the convoys that are organised by the Government. This number was reported at 69 per cent in Borno State. Forty-five per cent of respondents said they are relying on public transport for their return movement and 1 per cent will use their own private transportation.

When considering the planned mean of transportation for the return movement per state of assessment, there is a notable distinction in the use of public transportation between Adamawa (94%) and Borno (31%) States. This difference can be clarified by the efforts of the Borno State Government to facilitate the return of numerous displaced persons to their locations of origin. The analysis demonstrates that these efforts have a clear impact on the return intentions and means of travel of the IDPs who are currently displaced across Borno State.

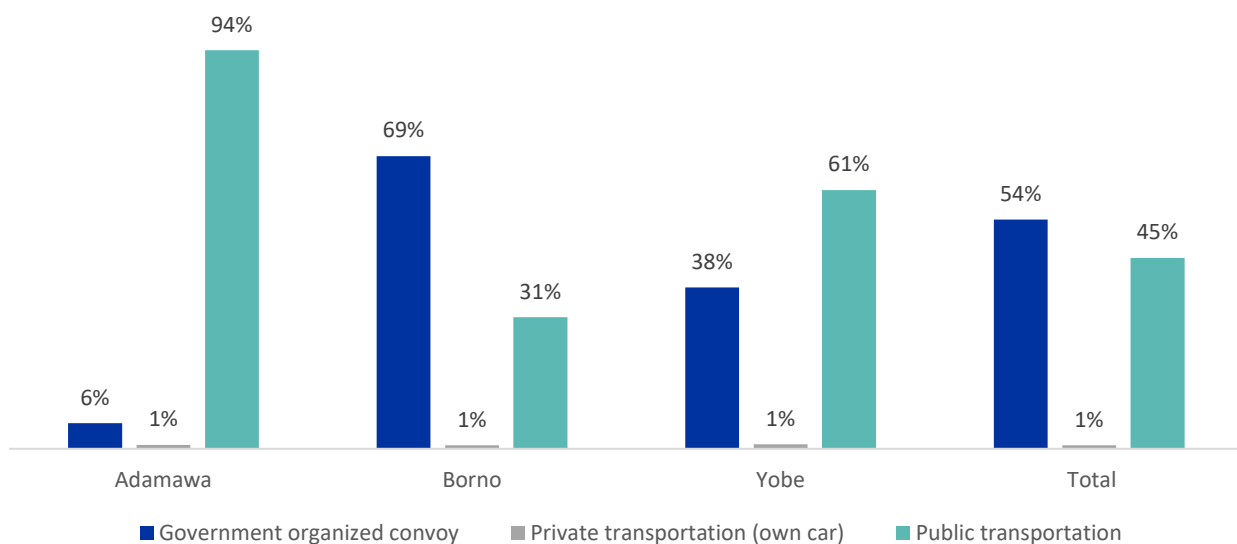


Figure 19: Mean of transportation for the return movement per state of assessment

When comparing the planned means of transportation for the return movement between IDPs residing among host communities and IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings, it is notable that the convoys organized by the State Government are predominantly targeting IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings. Seventy-four per cent of IDPs in camps/camp-like settings are opting for the Government organized convoys, while these convoys were only mentioned by 34 per cent of the respondents living among host communities. The Government organized convoys are part of the voluntary resettlement scheme developed by to Borno State Government and their intention to drastically reduce the number of IDP camps by the year 2026.



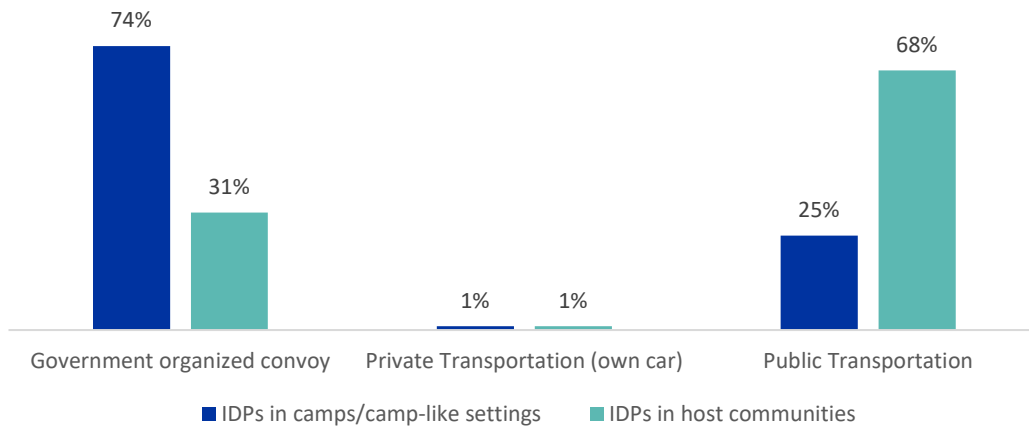


Figure 20: Mean of transportation for the return movement per settlement type

Primary needs in locations of origin

The return process does not end in the act of arriving back home. Multiple needs that are linked to the displacement situation and the conflict continue to persist in locations of origin. Thirty-eight per cent of the heads of IDP households that intend to return to locations of origin in the near future have indicated that they foresee food as their primary concern in their area of origin. Food is followed by shelter needs, as reported by 32 per cent of the respondents, and security, reported by 19 per cent of the respondents. Other reported needs were employment (4%), Non-food items (NFIs) (3%), health (1%), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) (1%), transportation (1%) and education (1%).

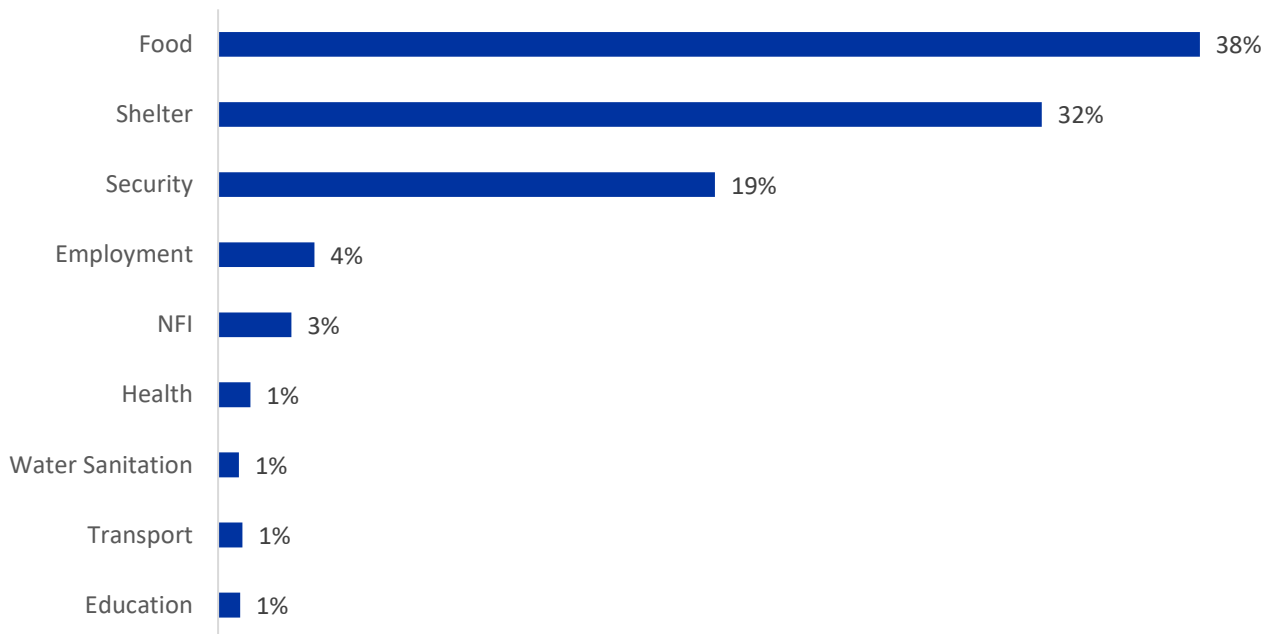


Figure 21: Primary needs in locations of origin

## No intention of leaving the location of displacement

As mentioned earlier in the report, 17 per cent of the surveyed IDP households in camps/camp-like settings and 34 per cent of the surveyed IDP households living among host communities had no intentions of returning to their areas of origin but preferred to remain in the location where they were currently residing. When considering IDPs who had no intentions of leaving the location where they were currently residing in the upcoming months, no major differences were noted between IDPs who were living in camps/camp-like settings and IDPs who were displaced among host communities. As mentioned before, Yobe is the only state in north-east Nigeria where more IDPs intend to remain in displacement than to return to locations of origin. In Borno State however, 10 per cent of the respondents residing in camps/camp-like settings stated that they were either undecided about their future or planned to leave the location of displacement but not return home. This explains why the difference between IDPs in host communities and IDPs in camp/camp-like settings in Borno State is more significant compared to the other states.

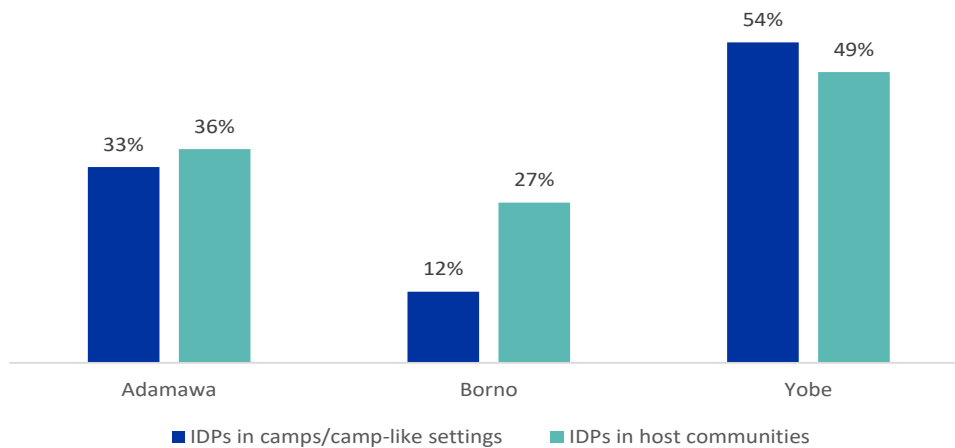


Figure 22: IDPs with the intention to remain in displacement per state and per settlement type

## Reasons not to leave locations of displacement

Seventy-one per cent of the heads of IDP households that wished to remain in displacement mentioned that they feel more secure in the environment in which they were living at that moment. Thirteen per cent of respondents cited the lack of security in their location of origin as their primary reason not to return to their location of origin. Ten per cent of respondents mentioned the better infrastructure in the camp as their main reason to remain in displacement while 3 per cent declared to stay because of the humanitarian assistance they are receiving while in displacement. Another 3 per cent reported that they do not wish to return to their locations of origin because they have found better employment opportunities while in displacement.

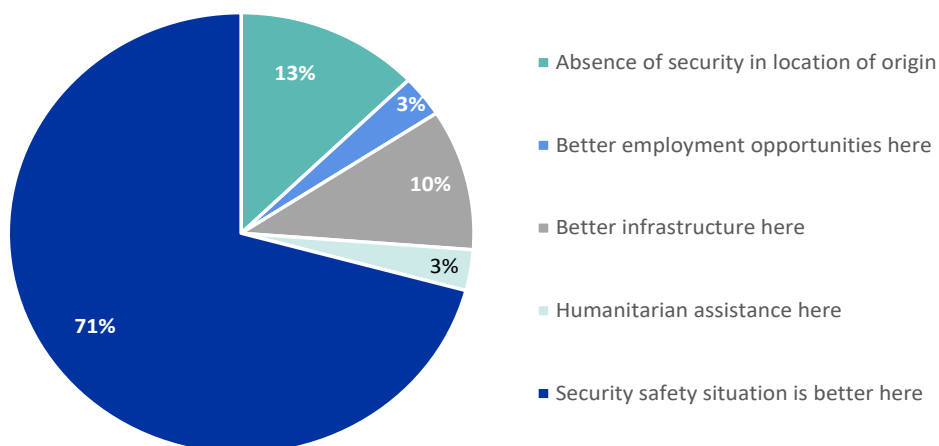


Figure 23: Reasons for IDPs not to leave locations of displacement



As demonstrated in the graphic below, when disaggregating the reasons that are motivating IDPs to remain in displacement per settlement type, the security situation was the determining element for both IDPs in camps/camp-like settings and IDPs living among host communities not to return to their locations of origin. However, in addition to the security situation, 24 per cent of IDPs in camps/camp-like settings have indicated that the infrastructure provided in the camp is their main reason to remain in displacement. For IDPs residing among host communities, the infrastructure was only mentioned by 4 per cent of the respondents as the reason motivating their intention to remain in displacement.

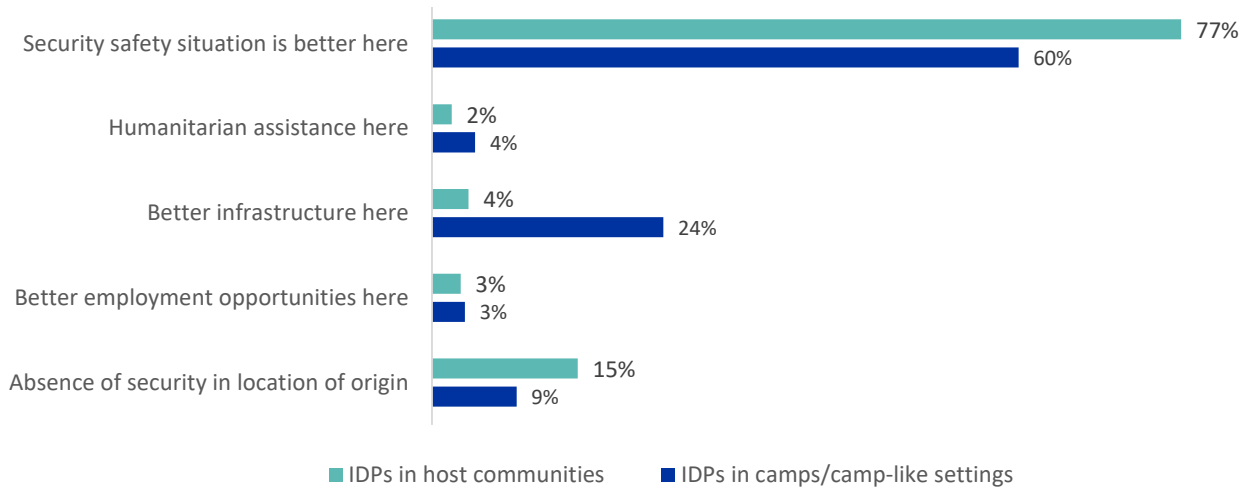


Figure 24: Reasons motivating IDPs not to return to locations of origin per settlement type

The disaggregated data per state of assessment demonstrates that, in all of the assessed states, the security situation plays a major role in the decision of IDPs to return home whether to remain in the locations where they are currently residing. Furthermore, compared to the states of Adamawa and Yobe, a higher percentage of IDPs in Borno State are remaining in their location of displacement because of the infrastructure (20% in Borno against 2% in Adamawa and 3% in Yobe). This can be explained by the fact that humanitarian support in Borno State is considerably more current than in the states Adamawa and Yobe, which has resulted in better infrastructure for displaced populations.

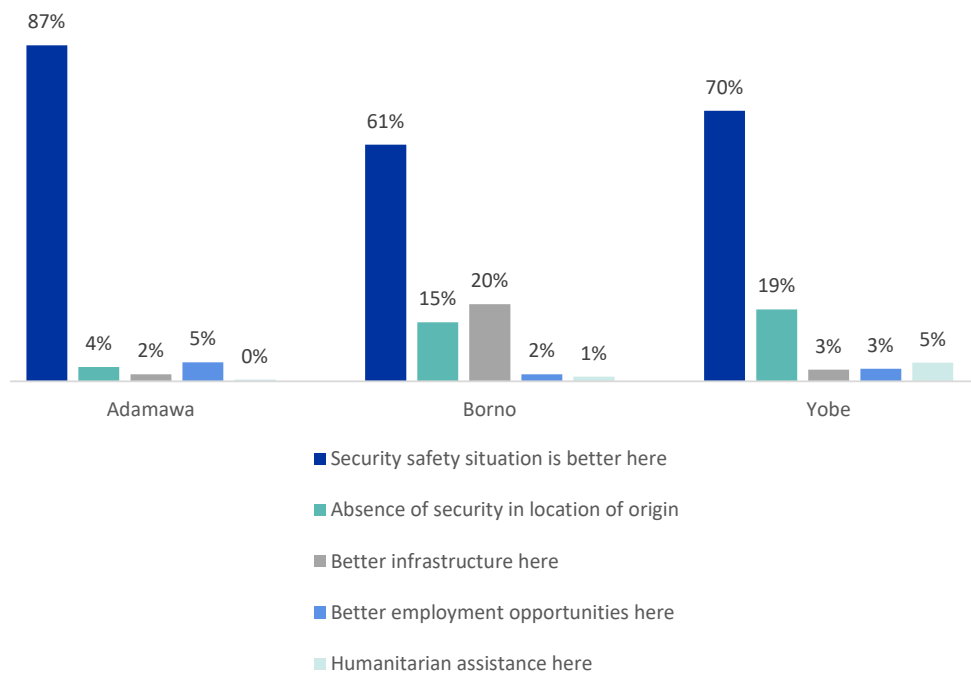


Figure 25: Reasons motivating IDPs to remain per state of assessment



Primary needs and expected assistance of IDPs who do not have the intentions to return to locations of origin

The main concern for 65 per cent of IDP households that wish to remain in displacement was food. Eleven per cent of respondents indicated that NFIs were their primary needs and 10 per cent of respondents were mainly concerned about livelihood opportunities. Shelter was reported by 9 per cent of the respondents as their primary need, followed by security (1%), transport (1%), medical kits (1%), education (1%) and WASH (1%).



Figure 26: Primary needs for IDPs who wish to remain in displacement

Food and financial aid were the most reported types of expected assistance reported by IDP households who wished to remain in the location where they are currently residing (32 per cent and 27 per cent respectively). Thirdly, NFIs for livelihood activities were reported by 12 per cent of respondents, followed by shelter (9%), employment (7%), transportation to return to locations of origin (4%), training (4%), health service (3%), education (1%) and WASH (1%).

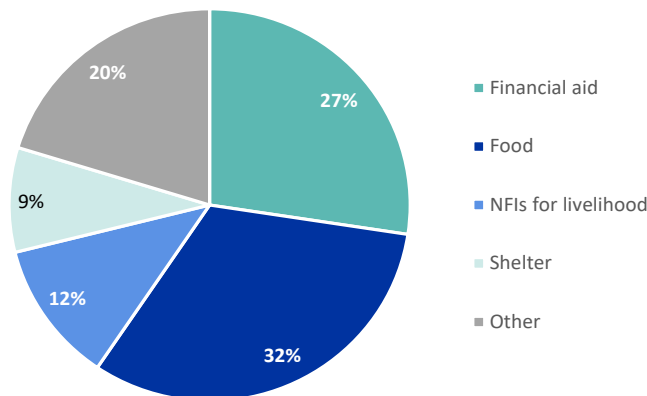


Figure 27: Expected assistance for IDPs who intend to remain in displacement



## 9. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to provide accurate and reliable insights in the future intentions of IDPs who are currently residing among host communities and in camps and camp-like settings across the states Adamawa, Borno and Yobe in north-east Nigeria. It presents the results of a survey conducted with a sample of 6,747 IDP households between 14 December 2020 and 31 March 2021.

As demonstrated in the report, the majority or 74 per cent of IDPs living in camps/camp-like settings and 65 per cent of IDPs residing among host communities wish to return to their locations of origin in the foreseeable future. The main reasons motivating their return intention are the improvement of the security situation in areas of origin, the reunification with family members and the lack of humanitarian assistance in locations of displacement. Seventeen per cent of encamped IDPs and 34 per cent of IDPs hosted in local communities expressed that they have no intention of leaving the locations in which they are currently residing in the upcoming months. They predominantly indicated the security situation and better infrastructure in locations of displacement as reasons not to return to their locations of origin.

The return movement to areas of origin is considered as a first step towards a durable solution to forced displacement. However, the report demonstrates that the success of the return movement is highly dependent on the security situation in the area of return. Furthermore, effective strategies to promote self-reliance and support with food, shelter and livelihood opportunities need to be put in place as they are the expected primary needs in the locations of origin.

To be able to successfully assist the high numbers of IDPs returning to their locations of origin, it is essential to regularly assess the return intentions of displaced populations and to increasingly measure their needs, demographics and socio-economic profiles. For the return movement to be safe, dignified and sustainable, the Government, the humanitarian community and development actors need to agree on collective outcomes and continue their engagement in areas of high return.