

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring in Hard-to-Reach Areas | Katsina State

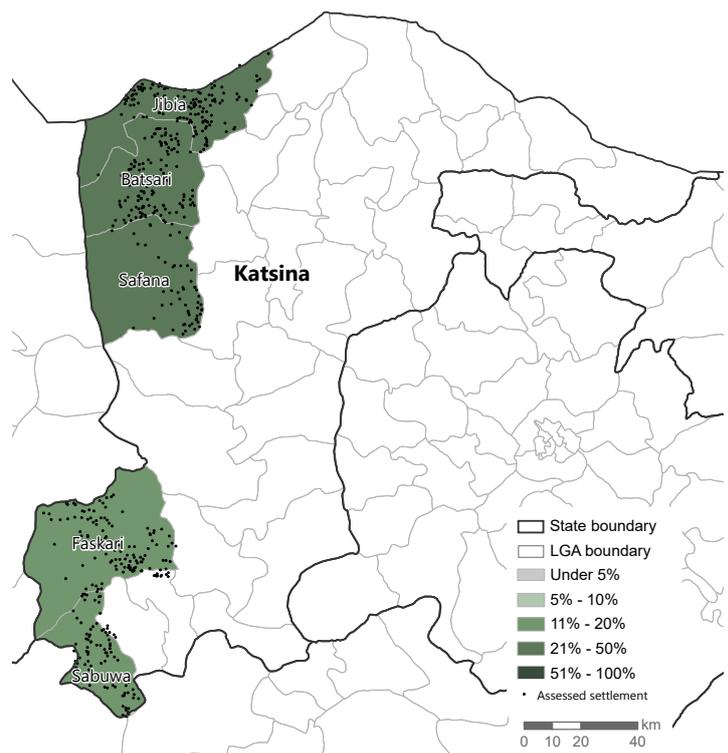
October - December 2022 | Northwest Nigeria

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Over the last decade, the Northwest region of Nigeria has experienced deadly inter-communal conflict and organised crime, often referred to as banditry, resulting in the deaths and displacement of people across the region.¹ To address information gaps facing the humanitarian response and inform humanitarian actors on needs, access to services, and movement intentions of communities in hard-to-reach areas, REACH conducted a pilot humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) assessment in hard-to-reach areas in Katsina state, Nigeria, between October and December 2022.

REACH HSM assessments aim to provide humanitarian service providers with up-to-date information on demographics, (inter) sectoral needs, access to services, displacement trends, and movement intentions among people living in hard-to-reach areas. **Findings are indicative of the situation in 542 hard-to-reach settlements across five local government areas (LGAs) in the three months prior to data collection (Map 1).**

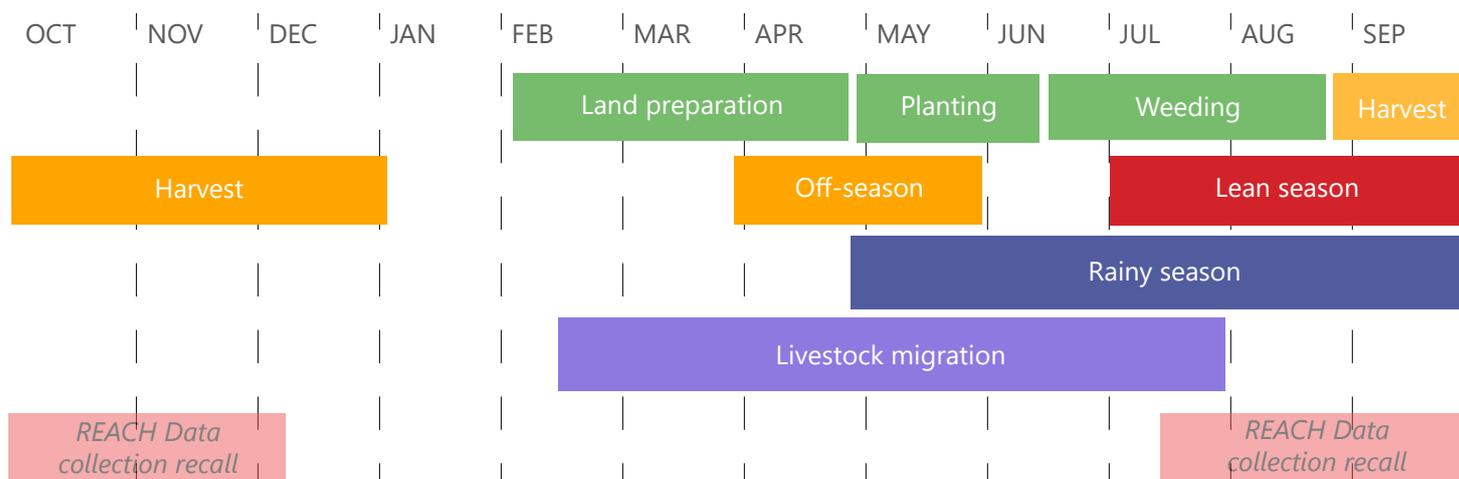
Map 1: REACH assessment coverage in Katsina State from October to December 2022, % of settlements assessed out of all populated settlements per LGA



KEY MESSAGES

- **Overall, findings suggest humanitarian needs in hard-to-reach areas of Katsina were mostly driven by a continued rise in violent incidents and banditry, displacement, disruptions to livelihoods, and floods.** Heavy flooding during the rainy season (May-September), which led to the destruction of livelihoods and disrupted supply chains, seems to have exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities driven by poor macro-economic conditions and insecurity. **Findings suggest that, as a result, access to food via traditional sources such as crop cultivation and livestock rearing was poor, with many people reportedly resorting to alternative sources, such as wild foods.** This situation appears to have been relatively worse in settlements in Batsari, Jibia and Safana LGAs.
- **Conflict and insecurity appeared to have largely shaped life in the assessed settlements, with violent incidents leading to frequent and multiple displacements of the population.** Kidnappings, killings, and sexual violence were the most reported protection concerns faced by people in these communities, with findings suggesting such concerns led to movement restrictions that have had adverse effects on livelihoods and access to basic amenities.
- **Findings suggest a heavy reliance on unimproved water sources and sanitary disposal methods in the assessed settlements, which may expose the population to elevated risks of water-borne diseases.** These conditions may lead to setbacks in ameliorating the ongoing Cholera outbreak in inaccessible and vulnerable locations in Katsina.²
- **Food consumption gaps appear to have led to the adoption of potentially harmful and unsustainable coping strategies.** In a context characterised by emergency levels of acute malnutrition,³ eating of wild foods known to make people sick, reductions in the number and size of meals, and feeding only children, were the most reported coping mechanisms used. Forecasts indicate that atypically high food insecurity during the harvest period (October- November) is likely to result in greater humanitarian needs, and a potential exhaustion of current coping mechanisms during the lean season of 2023 (July to September).⁴ Humanitarian assistance coverage in these areas is reportedly low and a continuation of that trend may likely push food and nutrition outcomes even further across emergency thresholds.⁵

Figure 1: Seasonal calendar of Northern Nigeria⁶ and assessment coverage period



METHODOLOGY

The assessment adopted the “Area of Knowledge” methodology to remotely monitor the situation in hard-to-reach areas. This involved collecting data at the settlement level through structured interviews with key informants (KIs), who were individuals with recent (within three months) knowledge of the situation in the assessed settlement. Hence, KIs were either (1) newly arrived internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had left an hard-to-reach settlement in the three months before data collection or (2) individuals who had contact with someone living in an hard-to-reach settlement in the last three months (traders, relatives etc.). Responses from KIs reporting on the same settlement were then aggregated to the settlement level and results are thus presented as the proportion of settlements assessed at the LGA level. **A total of 1,730 key informant interviews (KIIs), covering 542 hard-to-reach settlements, were conducted for this pilot.**

In addition, 34 open-ended in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted to further contextualise the quantitative data collected. IDIs were conducted with people who had

recently been displaced from hard-to-reach areas, reporting on the situation in the month prior to their displacement. In this context, the IDIs focused on displacement dynamics and the severity of humanitarian needs. In addition, secondary resources, including other REACH assessments and assessments conducted by other humanitarian organisations, were referenced to further triangulate the primary data collected from the structured KI interviews and the IDIs.

Data collection took place between the 11th of October and the 11th of December 2022 in five LGAs of Katsina state: Batsari, Faskari, Jibia, Sabuwa and Safana. **Findings are indicative of the situation in the assessed hard-to-reach areas in the three months prior to data collection* and should not be considered generalisable.**

**Note that the recall period for the quantitative findings was three months; this relatively long recall period may have limited the accuracy of KIs’ responses and partially overlapped with the lean season as well as the harvest season, which needs to be considered when interpreting findings on food security and livelihoods (See figure 1). Where possible, findings have been triangulated with secondary sources (e.g. FEWSNET).*

Figure 2: Number of assessed settlements per LGA

LGA	# of assessed settlements
Batsari	74
Faskari	73
Jibia	103
Safana	53
Sabuwa	75

LGA SELECTION CRITERIA

In consultation with the Katsina State Emergency Management Organisation (SEMA), REACH identified 17 LGAs in Katsina as hard-to-reach based on a joint risk assessment. The five LGAs selected for this humanitarian situation monitoring of hard-to-reach areas in Northwest Nigeria were deemed the most inaccessible in Katsina state based on (1) REACH data and operational experience obtained during the conduct of the 2022 Multi-sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) Northwest, and (2) by the Katsina state government represented by SEMA.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND POPULATION MOVEMENT

Overall findings indicate that demographics in hard-to-reach settlements have been shaped by the activities of bandits in recent years, which have reportedly led to frequent and multiple displacements, declining host community populations, fear of living in hard-to-reach settlements, and a host of other related protection concerns, such as kidnapping, sexual violence, and killings. Heavy floods during the 2022 rainy season appear to have further complicated the situation, reportedly leading to the destruction of shelters and livelihoods, deepening the vulnerability of people living in these settlements.

Remaining population

Although KIs in 94% of assessed settlements reported there were members of the original population⁷ still living in the settlement, in most of those assessed settlements, KIs estimated that only half (28%) or less than half (43%) of the original population remained, the latter was most reported in settlements assessed in Faskari, Safana, and Batsari. **This reported decline in the original population may be an indication of the extent to which insecurity in the settlements and limited access to basic needs and services has forced people to leave their area of origin.**

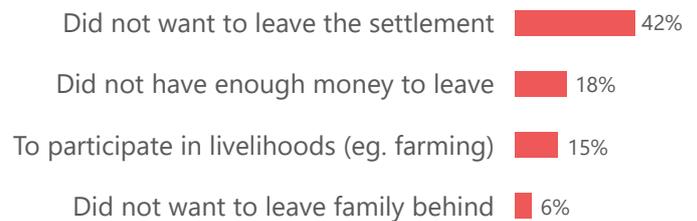
The most commonly reported reasons why people remained in the settlement, according to KIs, were because they did not want to leave the settlement (42%), because they did not have enough money to leave the settlement (18%) and because they could not abandon their livelihoods (15%). In some assessed settlements across Katsina (20%), but in higher proportions of assessed settlements in Jibia (46%) and Safana (31%) LGAs, KIs reported the presence of IDPs living in the hard-to-reach settlement. The presence of returnees was also reported by KIs in 41% of assessed settlements. **Overall, the demographic composition of most of these settlements appears to be characterised by declining host/original populations, pockets of displaced persons and returnees, most likely because of banditry, other forms of conflict, and flooding.**

Population movement

IDI respondents commonly attributed the displacement of people away from the hard-to-reach settlement to insecurity caused by the attacks of bandits. Additionally, they indicated most people who left the settlements often migrated separately, at different times, and to different locations given the triggers involved were often sudden.

Most respondents reported perceiving that people who had been displaced generally did not intend to stay in their current location, mostly because they were either used to their lifestyles in their old settlement or because the cost of living in their current location was too high. In some LGAs, most notably in Batsari, IDI respondents also reported people intended to stay in their area of displacement instead, reportedly because they felt it was safer.

Figure 3: Most commonly reported reasons people remained in the hard-to-reach settlement, by % of assessed settlements.



Most people reportedly fled the hard-to-reach settlement to their current location from as recently as 3 months ago to as long ago as 2 years. According to IDI respondents, people generally fled the settlement either solely on foot, by motorcycle or car, or through using a combination of those methods. The cost of travel reportedly depended on the form of transport used and ranged from nothing for those on foot to up to 9,000NGN for those who used vehicles of some kind. **While most respondents reported perceiving that people did not usually face any challenges along their displacement routes, some respondents shared stories of some people having been attacked/ambushed by bandits during their journey.**

“Yes, the day we moved from the settlement, some people encountered a roadblock by the bandits and one person was wounded. Those that left the settlement the following day were kidnapped by bandits.” Male respondent, Faskari LGA

People were reportedly mostly free to move to other locations and were not prevented or obstructed from leaving. However, a few respondents reported some people had faced challenges moving freely due to a lack of finances and the fear of being attacked during the journey. **Overall, the difficulty involved and sudden nature of displacement in the assessed settlements suggest people were arriving at their destinations with barely any resources to fall back on.** Without access to assistance or support in the destination settlement, this may precipitate the adoption of extreme coping mechanisms.

According to IOM-DTM, as of September 2022, there were an estimated 223,473 IDPs in Katsina alone,⁸ IOM data suggests that rural areas in Katsina, Benue, and Zamfara states had the largest IDP populations, which may be an indication of the effects of the pervasive conflict on settlements in these locations.⁹ **Given this data also indicates that IDP camps or camp like provisions are concentrated in urban areas, this suggests the bulk of displaced persons may be without aid or support in these rural and hard-to-reach areas.**¹⁰

SHOCKS AND DRIVERS OF HUMANITARIAN NEED

Conflict and Banditry in hard-to reach areas of Katsina state

Even though respondents interviewed for this report often singled out so-called 'banditry' as the main form of insecurity faced in hard-to-reach areas, there are other connected and unconnected conflict types such as herder-farmer clashes and overflows of the insurgency in the Northeast occurring in the Northwest region which further complicate the context, driving displacement and deepening humanitarian needs.¹¹

Some estimates suggest that over 30,000 bandits are spread across the region, taking advantage of porous borders with neighbouring countries to facilitate the proliferation of arms to carry out their activities.¹² ACLED estimates also indicate a steady rise in the number of reported violent incidents in the Northwest since 2020, up to almost twice the number of incidents documented in the Northeast by 2022.¹³ **This rise in reported incidents of violence appears to follow a similar time trend as the rise in displacement indicated in the previous section, which may indicate some degree of causality.**

The surge in violence appears to show no signs of abating. KIs in 59% of assessed settlements reported that most people perceived safety conditions in the hard-to-reach settlement had gotten worse in the three months prior to data collection, compared to just 7% of assessed settlements where it was reportedly perceived as having improved. Additionally, in 84% of assessed settlements, KIs reported there had been an incident of conflict which had led to the death or injury of a civilian in the settlement in the three months prior to data collection. **Beyond the physical threat of violence, in 93% of assessed settlements, KIs reported incidents of looting involving more than one household perpetrated by armed groups in the three months prior to data collection.**

In line with these findings, IDI respondents also commonly reported that, in the month prior to their departure from the hard-to-reach settlement, the most common protection concerns people in the settlement faced were theft/looting of property/farm produce, kidnapping, rape/sexual violence, and killing. **Almost all respondents reported most people did not feel safe staying in the settlement.** (See Figure 2 for main reported safety concerns per gender and age group by % of assessed settlements)

"NO! Most people do not feel safe staying in the settlement because of the bandits. They even attacked yesterday, they went to the settlement and collected some people's motorcycles. The insecurity is getting worse now." **Male respondent, Sabuwa LGA**

Figure 3: Most commonly reported protection concerns perceived for women, girls, men and boys, by % of assessed settlements.

Groups/Age	Protection Concerns		
Women ≥ 18	Abduction 56%	Violence by AOGs 53%	Sexual violence 49%
Girls < 18	Abduction 55%	Violence by AOGs 46%	Sexual violence 41%
Men ≥ 18	Abduction 65%	Violence by AOGs 59%	Extortion/Fees 10%
Boys < 18	Violence by AOGs 57%	Abduction 56%	Extortion/Fees 13%

Macro-economic pressures and market disruptions

According to FEWSNET, macroeconomic conditions in the Northwest are unstable, due to the disruption of food supply routes, currency depreciation, high transport costs, and low revenue from international trade (oil) production.¹⁴ Domestic fuel shortages reportedly continue to drive up costs of transportation, electricity, manufacturing, and production which have consequently led to declining food accessibility.¹⁵ FEWSNET reports inflation hit its highest level in 19 years in October 2022, rising to 21%, reportedly leading to atypically high commodity prices in markets despite the main harvest.¹⁶ **People reliant on markets for food are likely faced with more limited access to food and reduced spending power.**

Only in 54% of assessed settlements, KIs reported that there were functional markets people could walk to and from in the settlement. Access to needed commodities in these functional markets in the reporting period was also adversely affected by flooding, which led to disruptions in crucial supply routes with key bridges and roads washed out and impassable.¹⁷ **Additionally, IDI respondents reported conditions in markets had changed due to insecurity and the unavailability of goods in the markets, further restricting access to food among people in hard-to-reach settlements.** Attacks by bandits along market routes had reportedly led to a decline in trading activities due to fewer traders or buyers visiting the markets compared to before.

FEWSNET reports indicate that flooding in the Northwest and Northcentral regions had led to significant infrastructural damage, disrupted the main season harvest, and displaced people in farming areas.¹⁸ **The flooding and subsequent destruction of major transportation routes, especially in Kogi State (which is a main transit route that connects the ports of the southern regions of Nigeria to the Northern parts), reportedly also led to truncations of supply routes and stifled domestic trade.**¹⁹ **This development has further contributed to accessibility issues and scarcity of food and other goods in markets in the Northwest.** This appears to be corroborated by the relatively low proportion of assessed settlements (3%) where bought food was reportedly the main source of food for people, and the reported consumption of wild foods in most assessed settlements (85%).

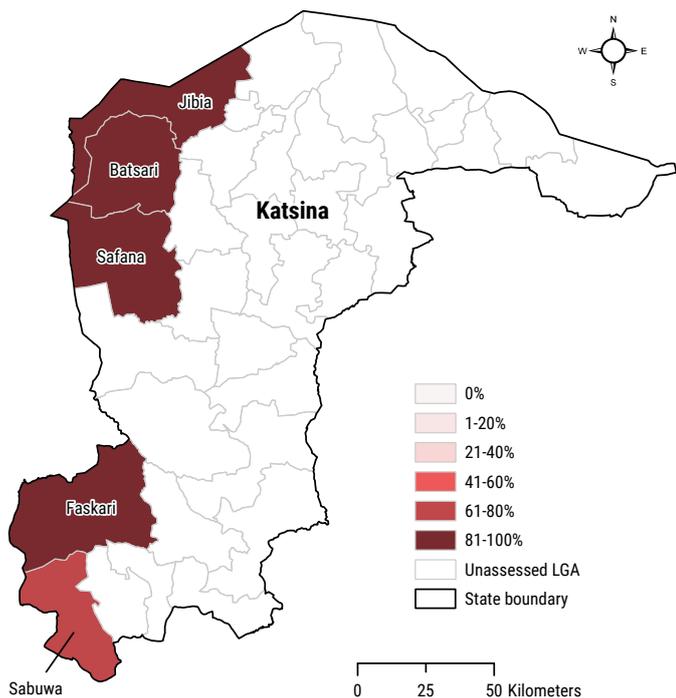
ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS AND SERVICES

Food security and livelihoods

Overall, findings indicate that the expected boost to food accessibility and availability from the main harvest period (September to December) did not fully occur in all assessed locations.²⁰ Adverse factors, including continuing conflict characterised by banditry and kidnapping, flooding, and unfavourable macro-economic conditions, and subsequent displacement away from land and livelihoods, may have led to food assistance needs remaining atypically high for this period. The impact of the worst flooding in over a decade across the country,²¹ which led to mass displacement and disruptions to agricultural production and supply chains, appears to have further compounded pre-existing difficulties imposed by high living costs and the ravages of conflict across Katsina state.

The majority of IDI respondents from across all assessed LGAs in the state reported most people did not have enough to eat and that food was neither available nor accessible for everyone living in the hard-to-reach settlements. In line with this, in 82% of assessed settlements, KIs reported perceiving most people were unable to access enough food. In those settlements where this was reported, the main reported reasons why people could not access enough food were smaller harvests due to insufficient farmland available (31%), destruction/theft of crops because of conflict (21%), unsafe and restricted access to land (11%), and the lack of harvested crops because people had not been able to cultivate (11%).

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported most people did not have access to enough food per LGA



While the coverage period of the analysis largely coincided with a time of the year when harvested food stocks are typically widely available (see figure 1), cultivation was only reported as the main source of food for most people in 40% of assessed settlements. **Notably, in nearly one-third (31%) of settlements, most people reportedly resorted to foraging for wild foods as their main source of food, something that was particularly commonly reported for settlements in Safana (90%) and Jibia (71%).** Indeed, the highest proportions of assessed settlements where people reportedly ate wild plants that were not usually a part of their diet as a main meal were also found in these LGAs: Jibia (98%) and Safana (92%).

Figure 4: Most commonly reported practiced by people in the assessed settlements in the 3 months prior to data collection, per LGA

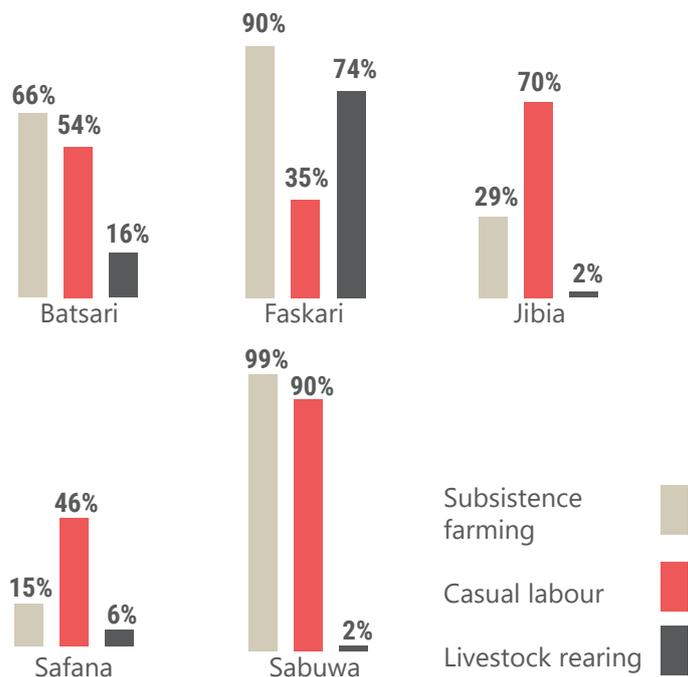
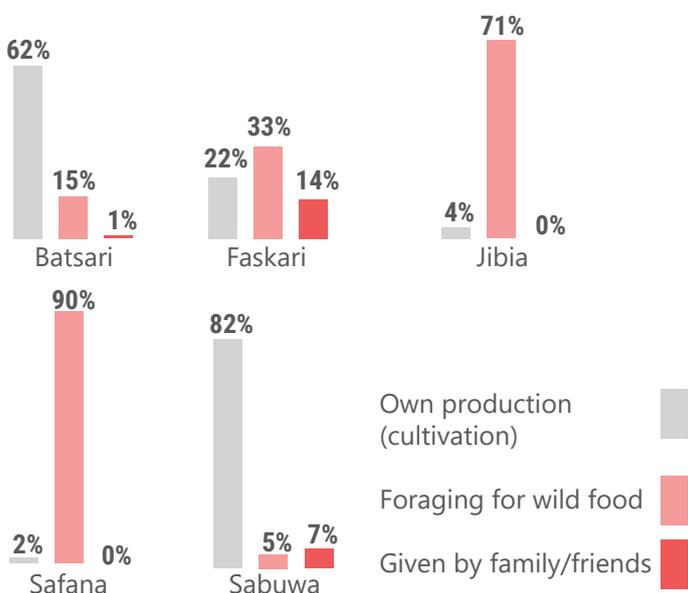


Figure 5: Most commonly reported sources of food for most people in the assessed settlements in the 3 months prior to data collection, per LGA



Findings suggest that food insecurity is also driven by barriers to usual livelihood activities in the hard-to-reach settlements. In 72% of all assessed settlements people were reportedly unable to engage in their usual livelihood activities. In nearly all of those settlements (98%), insecurity was the main reason for this. A reported upsurge in conflict-related violence in the last quarter 2022 compared to 2021 has seen AOG attacks, banditry, and cattle rustling incidents across the Northwest lead to the disruption of agricultural activities, leaving an estimated population of 1,617,959 in Katsina grappling with crisis or emergency level food consumption gaps (IPC Phase 3 & 4).²²

KIs in 80% of all assessed settlements reported most people had access to less land for cultivation compared to the previous farming season. Consequently, even though KIs in 81% of assessed settlements reported at least some people in the settlement had harvested crops during the most recent harvest, in 84% of those assessed settlements, KIs reported that the crop yield was below average/normal yield levels. **Putting this into perspective, a continuation of this trend could mean declines in food production are likely to continue, increasing the population in need of food assistance, and pushing more people into resorting to negative livelihood coping mechanisms.**

“Yes, it (livelihoods) did change because we are afraid to visit some farms behind our village when we had villages near by”
Male respondent, Batsari LGA.

Sabuwa (82%) and Batsari (62%) where the only LGAs where KIs in a majority of assessed settlements reported most people got their food from cultivation. However, in the majority of assessed settlements in these 2 LGAs (77%), KIs reported people ate wild foods that were not usually part of their diet as a main meal which suggests that food sourced from cultivation may not have been enough and that people in these settlements may have been on the brink of exhausting their harvests.

Nutrition

Altogether, the preceding paragraphs suggest a bleak outlook on food and nutrition in these areas, especially when triangulated with **results from the 2022 UNICEF SMART survey, which indicate that all 5 LGAs assessed through this HSM assessment were above the emergency thresholds for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in children under 5 years.** Moreover, all LGAs, except for Faskari and Sabuwa, **were reportedly above the emergency thresholds for global acute malnutrition (GAM) (see figure 3).**²³

According to Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), pervasive violence in the region further exacerbates what they describe as a “critical emergency malnutrition crisis” at “catastrophic levels”, requiring immediate humanitarian response, which is largely minimal at present.²⁴

Figure 6: UNICEF 2022 SMART Survey results on Acute/Chronic malnutrition in assessed LGAs- Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) by WHZ for children between 6-59 months.

Batsari	14.1
Faskari	9.2
Jibia	14.1
Safana	14.6
Sabuwa	9.2
Katsina State/Overall	13.5



Figure 7: UNICEF 2022 SMART Survey results on Acute/Chronic malnutrition in assessed LGAs- Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) by WHZ for children between 6-59 months.

Batsari	2.6
Faskari	2.1
Jibia	2.6
Safana	3.2
Sabuwa	2.2
Katsina State/Overall	3.1



WASH

Overall, while findings suggest that people generally had access to water sources, most people in most assessed settlements reportedly relied on unimproved water sources, indicating a high risk of morbidity. Indeed, the main reported sources of drinking water were unprotected wells (in 41% of assessed settlements) and surface water (17%). Boreholes, on the other hand, were reported as the main source in only 21% of assessed settlements.

KIs in assessed settlements reported that it took 30 minutes (39%), less than 30 minutes (33%) or between an hour to half a day (11%) to reach, access, and return from the water sources in their settlement. When there was not enough water, community members reportedly coped by walking longer distances to fetch water (31%) or dug new, unprotected wells (9%). In Jibia and Batsari LGAs, IDI respondents commonly reported most people had to rely on rainwater/surface water or travel long distances at great cost to find clean and sufficient drinking water. In some of these instances, this was because improved water points were either old or had suffered damage and were no longer functional. **Overall, these findings indicate people in the hard-to-reach settlement are unable to access enough clean and sufficient drinking water which may pose potential health risks.**

Figure 8: % of assessed settlements where KIs reported the main source of water was an **unimproved source**, by type of source per LGA

	Batsari	Faskari	Jibia	Safana	Sabuwa
Unprotected wells	30%	49%	6%	19%	88%
Surface water	17%	4%	47%	17%	1%

Figure 9: % of assessed settlements where KIs reported the main source of water was an improved source, by type of source per LGA

	Batsari	Faskari	Jibia	Safana	Sabuwa
Protected wells	9%	2%	7%	0%	1%
Boreholes	19%	28%	23%	35%	6%

The main sanitation facilities reportedly used by people in 32% and 31% of the assessed settlements were pit latrines without slabs and pit latrines with slabs, respectively. In other assessed settlements, however, the main sanitary methods used were open holes (21%). All the while, KIs in only one-fifth of assessed settlements (20%) reported most people washed their hands with soap. Taken together, these findings suggest a context of relatively high disease risk, which further compounds the deficits in safety, food access, and livelihoods.

🏥 Health

Since January 2022 to date, Katsina state has reportedly had one of the three highest cholera prevalence rates in Nigeria, with the outbreak having the most impact in hard-to-reach and conflict-affected zones of the state.²⁵

Flooding during the rainy season and into the first few weeks of the last quarter of 2022 may have also worsened pre-existing challenges with sanitation and hygiene in the northwest regions, thereby increasing the likelihood of spread of water and other vector borne diseases including cholera, malaria and diarrhoea.

All the while, primary healthcare accessibility appears to be generally limited across the Northwest region, with Katsina state considered among the worst-performing states in Nigeria in terms of healthcare provision.²⁶ In most assessed settlements (61%), KIs reported there was a functional healthcare facility that people could access, which was least commonly reported in Batsari (41%) and Safana (35%) LGAs. IDI respondents commonly reported health facilities available were mostly small community dispensaries or primary healthcare facilities manned by a chemist or a nurse. Several of these facilities were reportedly poorly staffed and not adequately equipped. In Batsari LGAs, half of the respondents reported the presence of physical health infrastructure but reported healthcare workers had either been abducted or had fled the settlement in fear of being attacked by bandits.

“Yes, we have a dispensary, but the health workers decided to shut it down due to the insecurity.” **Male respondent, Batsari LGA.**

Most IDI respondents who reported that, within the month prior to data collection, people did have access to a healthcare facility if they needed it indicated that the quality of healthcare provided was at an acceptable level.

🏠 Shelter

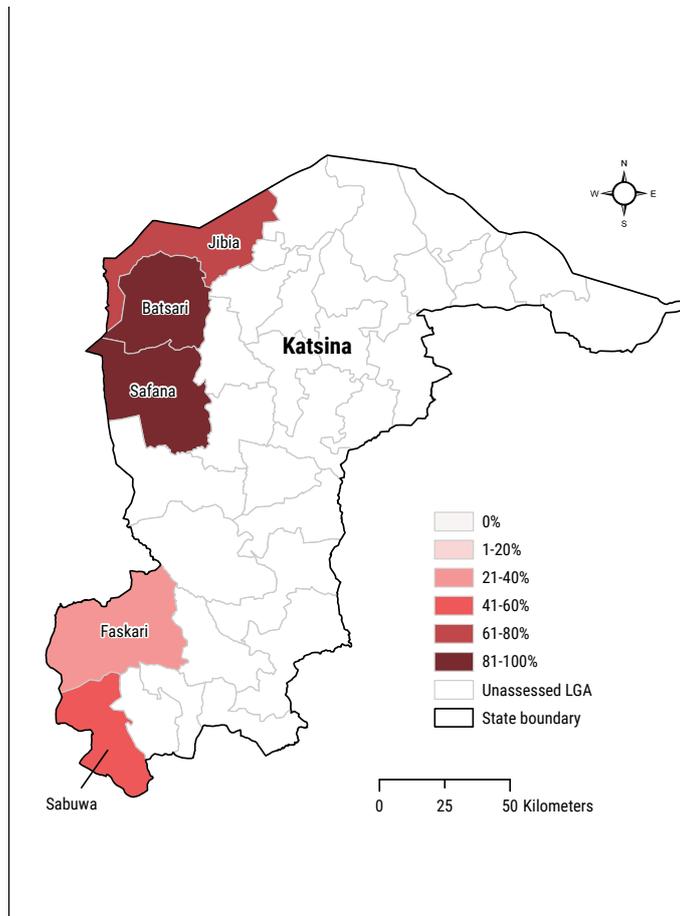
As of November 2022, the International Organisation of Migration’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM-DTM) had identified a total of 298,403 individuals in 40,988 households affected by floods in Katsina State. Batsari LGA was reportedly the worst affected with 13% of all affected individuals from the state located there.²⁷ **Findings suggest that these floods, coupled with pre-existing shelter damage, limited access to sustainable livelihood resources to effect repairs, and a lack of access to humanitarian aid, potentially contributed to shelter gaps in assessed settlements in hard-to-reach areas.**

According to the findings from the 2022 Northwest Nigeria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (NW MSNA), shelter needs were pervasive in Katsina state, particularly among IDPs.²⁸ In line with this, in 64% of assessed settlements, KIs reported the presence of shelters that were either completely or partially destroyed because of conflict. Floods appear to have also taken a toll on shelters; in 24% of assessed settlements, KIs reported people had left their homes to sleep elsewhere in the settlement because of flooding in the three months prior to data collection. The latter seems triangulated by findings from the Rapid Floods Assessment conducted by IOM in 90 flood-affected locations in Katsina, where shelter was the most reported urgent need of the affected population.²⁹

According to IDI respondents, most shelters in the hard-to-reach settlements are mud shelters with little or no variation in the type of shelter used by IDPs, returnees, and host community members. However, IDI participants commonly identified IDPs, and those whose homes were destroyed by the floods, as the groups which mostly lacked adequate shelter. Some respondents also reported there were people sleeping out in the open, but this was reportedly not due to a lack of adequate shelter but rather a coping mechanism against the threat of armed attacks at night (see below).

“Yes, some men sleep in the open, because when they attack, they kill mostly men, so during night-time they sleep in the open or hide to sleep in the open also.” **Female respondent, Batsari LGA**

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported there was at least **one shelter damaged by conflict** in the three months prior to data collection.



In most assessed settlements (66%), there reportedly were at least some community members who engaged in subsistence farming as their main livelihood activity. This was however reported in a lower proportion of assessed settlements in Jibia (29%) and Safana (15%), where people in most settlements reportedly engaged in casual labour (70% and 90%, respectively). IDI respondents commonly reported people had resorted to other forms of livelihood activity because farming activities had been adversely affected by rising costs of farm inputs and general price inflation, by movement restrictions and the fear of bandits, and reduced yields over the previous years through a combination of the latter factors.

According to IDI respondents, people were resorting to unsustainable and corrosive activities such as begging, casual labour, gathering of wild foods for consumption, and cutting trees to sell for firewood. Respondents commonly reported food resources acquired from these activities were expected to last for just a few days in most cases, which does not only signal the unsustainable and short-term nature of these coping strategies, but the low resilience of the affected population and their potential inability to handle any future shocks.

These forced livelihood adaptations and coping mechanisms are accompanied by food consumption gaps. **Findings indicate people have resorted to coping mechanisms centered around the consumption of wild food and meal-rationing strategies.** In more than 4 out of 5 assessed settlements (85%), KIs reported people were eating wild plants that were not usually a part of their diet as a main meal. In 89% of assessed settlements in Safana, Sabuwa and Jibia, where KIs reported this the most, people reportedly even consumed wild foods that had made them sick. The reported consumption of wild foods known to make people sick further indicates the depletion of consumable wild foods in the area, and thus the erosion of more typical coping strategies, at a time during which the harvest is typically still available in the region.

Findings indicate people had also adopted food rationing strategies in the hard-to-reach areas to cope with the lack of food. KIs in just 1% of assessed settlements reported there was almost no hunger because most people had access to food everyday over the past 30 days. **In fact, in 38% and 17% of assessed settlements respectively, most people reportedly faced moderate³² and severe hunger.³³** When there was not enough food, KIs in the assessed settlements reported people resorted to reducing the number of meals eaten per day (54%), feeding only the children in the household (48%) and limiting the size of meal portions (48%).

According to the Cadre Harmonisé, up to 4.7 million people in Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara will need food assistance in the upcoming 2023 lean season (June-August 2023).³⁴ Their analysis indicates a projected increase in the population in food security crisis + (IPC phase 3-5) 835,943 in this quarter by almost double to 1,617,959 in the 2023 lean season (June- August).

ADAPTATION AND COPING MECHANISMS

Traditionally, subsistence farming and livestock rearing are the main livelihood practices of people in Katsina state. However, the intensification of the activities of bandits, kidnappings and cattle rustling in Katsina has led to the displacement of households in conflict-affected settlements to makeshift camps or other settlements.³⁰ Additionally, KIs in 72% of assessed settlements reported most people were unable to engage in their usual livelihood activities. **As a consequence, many of those affected are unable to engage in their usual livelihood activities and have resorted to unskilled casual labour, petty trading and other alternatives for sustenance.³¹**

Despite this concerning outlook, KIs in only 24% of assessed settlements reported at least one person living in the settlement had received humanitarian or government assistance in the 6 months prior to data collection. Given the projected further deterioration of food security and the nature of coping mechanisms reported above, without an injection of urgent humanitarian or other aid interventions, people may face worse hunger and resort to more corrosive or emergency coping mechanisms in the coming months.

CONCLUSION

Insecurity, characterised by the continued surge in violence through the activities of bandits, poor macro-economic conditions, and the effects of the worst flooding in decades, appears to have led to major deficits and limited food security, livelihood activities and shelter in the assessed hard-to-reach areas. Difficulties accessing food, driven by disruptions to livelihood activities and atypical high commodity prices, have been exacerbated by destruction to farmland and disruptions to supply chain routes caused by flood damage. Consequently, findings indicate people in these communities have resorted either wholly or partially to reliance on non-traditional food sources such as foraging and other negative food consumption coping mechanisms and are grappling with emergency rates of acute malnutrition.

FEWSNET forecasts suggest the impact of flooding has likely negated the expected boost from harvests in this quarter given the extent of flood damage, poor macro-economic conditions and stresses to livelihoods caused by continued insecurity.³⁵ This is expected to worsen humanitarian conditions due to the potential adoption of extreme coping mechanisms, with a worsening situation likely continuing to drive up displacement, especially in the 2023 lean season. With reference to findings in this brief, continued monitoring of these areas and other hard-to-reach areas of the Northwest region is essential to provide information needed to inform humanitarian partners.

ENDNOTES

1. REACH, [Northwest Nigeria Multi-sector Needs Assessment \(MSNA\)](#), January 2023
2. FEWSNET, [Food Security Outlook- Flooding, high input prices, and conflict drive a below-average harvest and elevated food needs](#), October 2022-May 2023
3. UNICEF, Smart Survey in Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara, August 2022. (Unpublished)
4. FEWSNET, [Food Security Outlook- Flooding, high input prices, and conflict drive a below-average harvest and elevated food needs](#), October 2022-May 2023
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31. Ibid
32. **Moderate hunger** means most people in the settlement sometimes had no access to food (during the last 30 days, most households had no access to food for between 3 to 10 days in total)
33. **Severe hunger** means most people in the settlement often had no access to food (during the last 30 days, most households had no access to food for more than 10 days in total)
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ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).