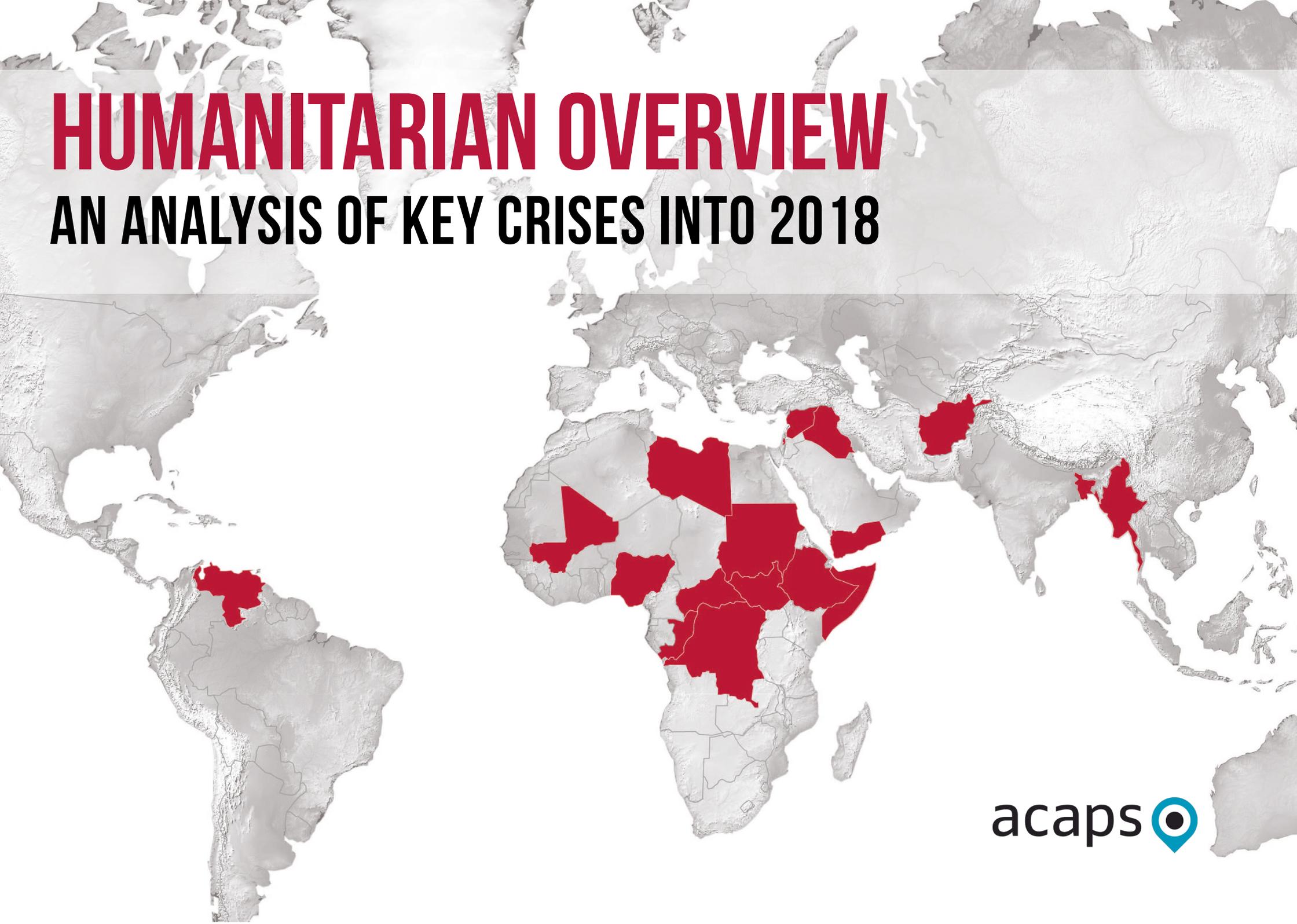# HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

AN ANALYSIS OF KEY CRISES INTO 2018

acaps

HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW
AN ANALYSIS OF KEY CRISES INTO 2018

PALESTINE: GAZA
The long-standing blockade and ongoing electricity crisis are likely to continue affecting access and provision of health and WASH services.

SYRIA
Conflict is likely to escalate in Idlib and Eastern Ghouta, and to continue in Deir-ez-Zor, leading to displacement, health, and protection needs.

AFGHANISTAN
Security situation likely to deteriorate with the growing consolidation of control by the Taliban over rural areas, exacerbating food, health, and protection needs across the country.

LIBYA
Conflict, displacement, and mismanagement of migration flows are likely to continue, leading to increased protection, health, and livelihood assistance needs.

IRAQ
High numbers of displaced people returning to their places of origin are likely to have protection, food security, and livelihood needs.

ROHINGYA CRISIS: MYANMAR & BANGLADESH
Food insecurity and marginalisation of Rohingya likely to continue in Myanmar, while WASH and protection needs will remain a priority in Bangladesh.

MALI
State withdrawal likely to lead to deterioration of security and humanitarian situation, increasing displacement and protection and food security needs.

NIGERIA: BORNO
A shift to sporadic attacks will likely continue to restrict humanitarian access and exacerbate food insecurity and health needs.

YEMEN
Humanitarian situation likely to deteriorate, particularly in the south, west, and northern governorates: food security continues to deteriorate, and cholera is likely to continue to spread, increasing health, WASH, and food needs.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Conflict is likely to continue and exacerbate internal and external displacement, as well as increase food and shelter needs.

ETHIOPIA
Food insecurity and malnutrition are likely to persist in the Somali region, and WASH will also remain a priority need.

VENEZUELA
The economic crisis, political deadlock, and insecurity are likely to increase health and food needs, and continue to drive displacement.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Conflict is likely to continue in the Pool region, causing additional displacement and acute needs, especially food security, livelihoods, and health.

SOMALIA
Food security, nutrition, and WASH are likely to remain top priorities for 2018 as drought conditions and insecurity continue.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Continued violence and unrest are likely to result in food security and protection needs, as well as further displacement.

SOUTH SUDAN
Ongoing insecurity will likely result in extreme food insecurity, large-scale displacement, and protection needs.

SUDAN
Security situation is unlikely to improve, while displacement further limits access to normal livelihood activities: protection, food, and health are priority needs.

PREFACE

2017 has been characterised by a series of tragic records: Yemen and South Sudan have had the highest level of cholera cases for those countries ever, the level of displacement in CAR was at its highest since 2014, Mali saw its most violent month since 2013, and the price of the food basket (on the black market) in Venezuela recorded the highest increase there in 20 years.

If 2017 did not look good, predictions for 2018 are no better: violence and insecurity are likely to deteriorate in Afghanistan, DRC, Libya, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, and Syria next year. Food security is likely to deteriorate into 2018 in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Yemen.

With the Humanitarian Overview we aim to provide analysis in order to better understand future developments. ACAPS has identified 17 major humanitarian crises, reaching 18 countries, where we see acute challenges for the humanitarian community. We focus on countries where the crisis trend indicates a deterioration in 2018 and a corresponding increase in need. We have also included countries where the crisis is not predicted to worsen, but is likely to remain severe: Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Palestine, Sudan, and Syria.

The report aims to offer an independent perspective to help inform and support humanitarian decision-makers and field workers. Our evidence-based approach combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, which allows a deeper understanding of the context.

Our hope is that we not only create a shared understanding of humanitarian crises, but that we also facilitate dialogue. We welcome and encourage your feedback, which can only strengthen our work and allow us to better contribute to the humanitarian sector in the future.

Lars Peter Nissen
ACAPS Director

Geneva, 30 November 2017

INTRODUCTION

The *Humanitarian Overview: An analysis of key crises into 2018* focuses primarily on the crises that are expected to deteriorate in the coming year and outlines the likely corresponding humanitarian needs.

Based on our weekly Global Emergency Overview (GEO), we have identified 12 countries that are likely to face deteriorating humanitarian situations in 2018. We include a further six countries where the crises are already severe and likely to continue in a similar trend.

DETERIORATING CRISIS	ONGOING CRISIS
AFGHANISTAN	ETHIOPIA
BANGLADESH	IRAQ
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	NIGERIA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	PALESTINE
LIBYA	SUDAN
MALI	SYRIA
MYANMAR	
REPUBLIC OF CONGO	
SOMALIA	
SOUTH SUDAN	
YEMEN	
VENEZUELA	

Across these countries, food security, displacement, health, and protection are expected to be the most pressing humanitarian needs in 2018.

Most humanitarian crises in this report are driven by conflict, with a spread in violence and shifts in tactics this year in several countries. The situations in Congo, South Sudan, and Venezuela are further compounded by economic crisis, and Ethiopia and Somalia are particularly affected by natural disasters.

ACAPS has taken a regional approach to analysis of the Rohingya crisis as the scope of it covers both the high influx of refugees into Bangladesh as well as those that have remained in Myanmar. While it is not easy to analyse from a regional perspective as data is primarily collected on a country level, it is valuable and ACAPS is working to expand this further in the future.

Each country section of this report covers the key driving factors of the current situation and the outlook and resulting humanitarian needs for 2018.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

METHODOLOGY NOTE

COUNTRY SELECTION

Throughout the year, analysts at ACAPS conduct daily monitoring and independent analysis of 150 countries to produce a weekly Global Emergency Overview (GEO) of humanitarian crises in order to support evidence-based decision making in the humanitarian sector. The in-depth knowledge acquired in this process, backed by the application of a rigorous methodology, enabled the production of this report, which highlights the anticipated developments and priority sectoral needs in 18 countries in 2018.

The selection of countries for this report is based primarily on the internal ACAPS prioritisation methodology. Countries were considered for inclusion if they fell within one of the following three categories: an elevation in their GEO classification in 2017 due to a change in the level of need, such as Ethiopia; the occurrence of events or trends in the past months that indicate a likely deterioration leading to a future spike in needs, such as Venezuela; or consistent Severe Humanitarian Crisis status classification within the GEO over the past 12 weeks, such as Syria.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this report is to anticipate the likely developments and resulting priority sectoral needs for each of the selected countries in 2018 based on existing trends. It does not attempt to predict sudden onset disasters, nor does it include risks. For the countries included, ACAPS has examined the factors driving the evolution of humanitarian crises in 2017 and analysed how those drivers are likely to shape the situation going forward. A driving factor directly influences or leads to changes in a crisis situation. The focus for this product was on drivers that had a negative impact in 2017 and which were likely, based on the existing trend, to continue to have an impact in 2018.

Throughout the year, analysts have monitored trends and developments in over 150 countries. Countries were selected for inclusion in this report after an initial rapid analysis of context and trends. Analysts then identified the key drivers that contrib-uted to developments in the crisis in 2017, and were able to make links between these drivers and the progression of events that occurred leading to humanitarian needs in 2017. Extrapolation of the driver trends into the 2018 context led to the development of informed assumptions about the likely future situation for 2018 and the likely humanitarian consequences of this projected outlook. When considering the future sectoral priorities, consideration was given to the previous needs in 2017, the likely impact of the identified drivers on these sectors in 2018, the possible impact on other sectors and where possible, the geographical areas likely to be affected. Based on this analysis, the countries included in this report were categorised as deteriorating or ongoing crises.

LIMITATIONS

This report has the advantages of breadth and timeliness, but it also has limitations. Considering the diversity and complexity of the crises, combined with the number included, it has not been possible to cover each country in detail. Instead, we have explored the broad evolution of the crises to inform operational, strategic, and policy decision-makers.

Time and size constraints have also narrowed our focus. We have concentrated on an analysis of trends indicating likely deterioration, which means that we have not focused on the multiple possible scenarios thrown up by considering neutral and positive factors. Equally, unforeseen circumstances may change the course of events, but have not received our attention in this report.

Information gaps have also had an impact. Additionally, while every effort was made to ensure that all information was up to date at the time of publishing, the fluidity of the situations in some countries means that significant changes are often observed from one month to another.

While these are common challenges faced by analysts in the humanitarian sector, we are confident that undertaking this analysis contributes to better humanitarian planning as a result of improved awareness of priority needs in the countries covered in this report.

AFGHANISTAN

Security is among the most urgent challenges in Afghanistan as security incidents throughout 2017 have remained at peak levels and are the highest since reporting began in 2007. A defining feature this year has been a notable shift in government military tactics, focusing their efforts on urban areas, which has resulted in a consolidation of control over rural areas by the Taliban. In addition, the increased number of returns from Pakistan and Iran is putting pressure on host communities that are already strained by the continuing conflict. Access to vital public and humanitarian services is limited by the conflict and is further affected by targeted attacks on NGO staff. The security situation is likely to continue to deteriorate in 2018 leading to greater health, food security, and protection needs.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Taliban advances
Changing tactics by the government has created more space for the Taliban to consolidate control in rural areas

Increasing returnees
Returnees from both Iran and Pakistan are driving humanitarian needs in host communities that are already strained

Deteriorated access
Shrinking humanitarian operational space in both rural and urban environments

Fragmented government
Political instability continues to worsen, limiting the government's capacity to support people's needs

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Security situation likely to deteriorate with the growing consolidation of control by the Taliban over rural areas and the resulting shift in conflict dynamics.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

Health

Protection

CURRENT SITUATION

Taliban advances have been driven by shifting conflict dynamics in 2017 following a change in government forces' tactics. The security focus is now increasingly on urban areas at the cost of a relative fall-back from rural areas. As a result, the Afghan government has lost over 5% of the territories it controlled, amounting to a loss of an estimated 19 districts (SIGAR, July 2017). This shift in tactics has been reflected in the Taliban's ability to secure and launch attacks from rural strongholds. In addition, the 2017 fighting season was characterised by favourable weather (above average temperatures and below average precipitation) conducive to fighting. As a result, this year saw the highest number of recorded security incidents, of which two thirds were armed clashes, with civilian casualties at high levels (UNAMA, October 2017). Both the increasing conflict and casualty numbers are compounding protection needs and access constraints across the country (UN, September 2017).

An indicator of the Taliban's growing control over rural territories, particularly in the northern and southern provinces, is the significant increase in areas used for opium poppy cultivation, which rose by 67% compared to 2016, with the production of opium rising by 87%. The increase in production is likely to provide a significant financial boost for the purchase of arms and to act as a pull factor for recruitment (UNODC, November 2017).

The number of **returnees** from both Pakistan and Iran is at higher levels than previous years: in 2017 over 488,000 people have returned as of mid-November. In Pakistan, the main driver has been deteriorating relations between the two states although there was a slight improvement in the third quarter of this year. Returns from Iran are driven by forced deportation as the Iranian government perceives the undocumented Afghan migrants as negatively impacting the economy. The increasing number of returnees continues to strain local resources in host communities. Pakistan returnees mainly resettle in Nangarhar, Kabul, Kandahar, and Kunduz while the majority of those returning from Iran enter the country from Nimruz province but information beyond this is limited (IOM, November 2017).

The **humanitarian access** situation in Afghanistan has worsened this year. Incidents involving humanitarian staff have been increasing throughout 2017 with 305 reported incidents by October, representing an 80% increase compared to the same period in 2016. Health facilities and staff are particularly being targeted. Over 110 incidents were recorded up until the end of October - over three times more than the same period in 2016 (OCHA, November 2017).

The ongoing conflict, access constraints, and high numbers of IDPs and returnees are exacerbating an already difficult food security situation. Between August and November this year, an estimated 7.5 million people are facing Crisis and Emergency (IPC Phases 3 and 4) food security outcomes - significantly higher than same time period in 2016. The estimated number of people in IPC 4 is nearly one million more than that in 2016 (FEWS Net, October 2017).

Political instability, driven by a **fragmented government,** has seen a significant spike following the announcement in June of elections to be held in July 2018. A number of political opposition parties have become more vocal and the newly formed coalition party, the Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan, appears to be the main opposition party at this time. The party has focused on the high level of civilian casualties and accused the government of failing to protect its people. A destabilised government will likely embolden armed groups to exploit the situation and further drive the conflict across Afghanistan, increasing the number of affected people (UN, September 2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Taliban advances characterised by a shift in conflict dynamics look likely to continue to move towards more large-scale, organised conflict styles in 2018, restricting access to some areas of the country. Increased poppy cultivation and opium production will likely provide secure financing for armed groups in 2018. Additionally, if weather during the fighting season is similar to that seen this year, this will again create a more conducive environment for fighting.

Returnees at similar levels as 2017 from Iran are likely to arrive in 2018 while a lower number from Pakistan can be expected. An estimated 2 million Afghans still reside in Iran, of which half are refugees. Returnees will continue to return to areas with limited access and further strain host communities.

The consolidation of Taliban strongholds in rural areas means 2018 could see a similar if not higher level of insecurity compared to 2017. This in turn will compound access restrictions both for humanitarian actors and those seeking assistance. Those displaced by conflict will be forced more frequently into areas controlled by armed groups and therefore face greater access challenges.

The fragmentation of the government, which can be expected to worsen as the elections get closer, can be seen as a likely driver of the humanitarian situation in 2018 by compounding the conflict dynamics and access drivers.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

Continued high levels of returnees and IDPS, who have the highest food security needs, are likely to strain host communities' food resources. Acute food insecurity across Afghanistan remains high in 2017, with estimated numbers for those facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes significantly higher than the same period in 2016 and likely to remain so at least into early 2018.

Protection

With no de-escalation of the conflict expected, similar if not greater civilian casualties than in 2017 is likely for 2018. Conflict related exploitation of children such as child labour and child soldiers can be expected to continue. While SGBV is commonly reported across Afghanistan, with shrinking humanitarian operation space it will be harder to reach those in need of protection support.

Health

Health facilities and staff have been heavily targeted throughout 2017 by armed groups, further reducing already limited capacity. In 2018 this is likely to have two impacts: the erosion of health service capacity across Afghanistan, and the reduction of the country's coping capacity to respond to disease outbreaks.

CAR

Insecurity escalated in CAR in 2017 as fighting spread and armed groups expanded their influence, most notably in the southeast. A loose alliance of ex-seleka and some anti-balaka groups at the end of 2016 enabled the pooling of military resources but also resulted in heavy fighting due to internal divisions within the coalition. Further, anti-balaka groups have increased their military capacity to perpetrate attacks. The escalation in violence was also facilitated by a power vacuum left by international forces and the CAR army's lack of capacity to respond. The security situation is likely to continue to deteriorate in 2018, exacerbating food and shelter needs, and driving more displacement. The number of IDPs in 2017 reached the highest level since 2014.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

New loose alliances
Increased military capacity and intra-group fighting since the October 2016 alliance between ex-seleka and some anti-balaka groups

Anti-balaka attacks
Anti-balaka groups perpetrated significant attacks in the southeast as they are becoming better trained, organised, and equipped

Withdrawal of international forces
Power vacuum from the withdrawal of French forces, and American and Ugandan forces in the southeast

Access deteriorating
Limited humanitarian response as access deteriorated country-wide due to the violence

Geographical expansion of the fighting
Fighting spread to the centre and southeast

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Conflict is likely to continue in 2018 as armed groups are likely to capitalise on their expanding influence and their increased military capacity.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Displacement

Shelter & NFIs

Food security & livelihoods

CURRENT SITUATION

After repeated attempts to re-unify in order to amplify both their military strength and leverage in negotiations since July 2014, a loose alliance between ex-seleka and some **anti-balaka groups** formed at the end of 2016, which increased their capacity to perpetrate attacks. Ex-seleka Front Populaire de Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) leader Nourredine Adam had already allied with some anti-balaka groups in 2015. When he returned from Chad in 2016, he resumed calls to unify ex-seleka factions. In October 2016, the Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) and the Rassemblement patriotique pour le Renouveau de Centrafrique (RPRC) allied with FPRC (Enough Project 10/08/2017).

The alliance, sometimes referred to as the FPRC coalition, increased these groups' capacity to perpetrate attacks. Smaller groups gained access to more weapons, and more established armed groups increased their manpower calling on mercenaries from Sudan and Chad, and extended their influence over major weapon trafficking routes, notably from DRC (Jeune Afrique 07/08/2017). However, because these alliances are loose and opportunistic, and group leaders have little control over their fighters, the increased capacity to stage attacks also fuelled a power struggle between factions within the alliance (UN 02/06/2017).

The **reduction of international forces** in-country around the beginning of 2017 created a power vacuum, which enabled armed groups with increased military capacity to move into new areas, notably in southeastern CAR. Operation Sangaris, the French mission present in CAR since December 2013, deployed in Bangui and on major roads in the east and west, officially ended on 31 October 2016, leaving the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to secure these areas. American special forces and the Ugandan contingent of the African Union Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) fighting the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in southeastern CAR withdrew in April and May 2017 (RFI 25/04/2017).

Neither the CAR army, the Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA), undertrained and limited by an arms embargo, nor the understaffed, contested MINUSCA, were able to compensate for the withdrawal of these troops (ICG 28/09/2017). The situation has been aggravated by the weak, unpopular, and fragmented leadership of President Touadera, elected in February 2016, who has notably given government positions to armed group members, allowing impunity for ongoing violence (Jeune Afrique 12/10/2017).

Between October 2016 and February 2017, **violence expanded** to Ouaka and Haute-Kotto prefectures, and in March to Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou, and Basse-Kotto. In July, violence also resumed in Ouham and continued to spread as of November 2017. While fighting varied in scale and the groups involved, most of the violence between October 2016 and March 2017 can be attributed to offensives launched by the FPRC coalition against Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) strongholds in the centre and the south. The UPC is a mostly Fulani armed group formerly aligned with the ex-seleka and was one of the strongest factions in CAR in 2016. It refused to join the FPRC coalition but controlled areas with significant economic resources. As UPC retreated, violence expanded south and east and aggravated already existing tensions. Areas around Bambari, Bria, and Bangassou towns were particularly disputed as they hold significant natural resources. Fighting also erupted between factions of the FPRC in Bria, highlighting the potential for internal dissent and leaders' weak control over their fighters (RJDH 09/06/2017). The two rival groups, FPRC and UPC, formed an alliance in October despite some resistance within the groups and from other armed groups. This alliance suggests that significant parts of eastern CAR are now under the influence of these two groups.

Since March 2017, high levels of violence can be attributed to anti-balaka groups, notably in Haut-Mbomou and Haute-Kotto, who are becoming better organised, trained, and militarily equipped (UN 02/06/2017). This is compounded by increased armed group activity by Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation (3R) in the west.

As violence spread to new areas, and conflict continued in the north and west of the country, **access significantly deteriorated** in 2017 with over 232 incidents against aid workers recorded in the first eight months of 2017 and 13 killed as of November (OCHA 19/08/2017, OCHA 20/11/2017). Humanitarian actors have suspended operations and withdrawn from key areas affected by the conflict (Reuters 2607/2017). Since February, access deteriorated in Mbomou, Haute-Kotto, and Haut-Mbomou in the east, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka, and Basse-Kotto in the centre, and Ouham, Nana-Mambere, Ouham-Pende, and Mambere-Kadei in the west.

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

In 2018, heavy fighting between armed groups is likely to continue, particularly in central and southern areas of the country. Armed groups are likely to capitalise on their expanding geographical influence to strengthen their control over economic resources. Divisions between and within groups are likely to be exacerbated as loose and weak alliances continue to be created, resulting in further violence.

On 15 October the 2017 key rival groups, FPRC and UPC, announced an alliance, but this is not likely to hold. UPC and FPRC fighting in 2017 aggravated tensions between communities in southeastern CAR, particularly between Gula/Runga and Fulani groups. The creation of self-defence groups based on affiliations to communities is likely to exacerbate violence. The UPC-FPRC alliance is also likely to galvanise fighting within the FPRC coalition, creating additional divisions between groups and factions that support the alliance and those that do not (RFI 11/10/2017).

Attacks by anti-balaka groups, particularly in the east, are likely to continue.

In the northwest, 3R is likely to profit from seasonal transhumance activities as a source of income and to strengthen its military activities.

Humanitarian operations outside Bangui are likely to be increasingly difficult due to ongoing violence.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Displacement

Displacement levels, both within and outside CAR, are likely to continue rising in 2018. As of 31 October 2017 there are over 600,000 IDPs in the country. This is an increase of 50% compared to January, and the highest level since August 2014 (UN 14/09/2017). More population movement is likely to occur towards Cameroon and DRC due to fighting in western and southern CAR. Shelter, food, and WASH needs are the most reported needs among displaced communities.

Food security & livelihoods

Food security is likely to continue to deteriorate in 2018 in the northwest, southeast, and central parts of the country. According to the last February 2017 Cadre Harmonisé, over 300,000 people faced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes (IPC 02/2017). Households in Ouham, Ouham Pende, Nana Grebizi, Vakaga, and Ouaka prefectures are most affected and are likely to continue to face food insecurity in 2018 (FEWSNET 17/09/2017). IDPs are likely to be most affected by food insecurity.
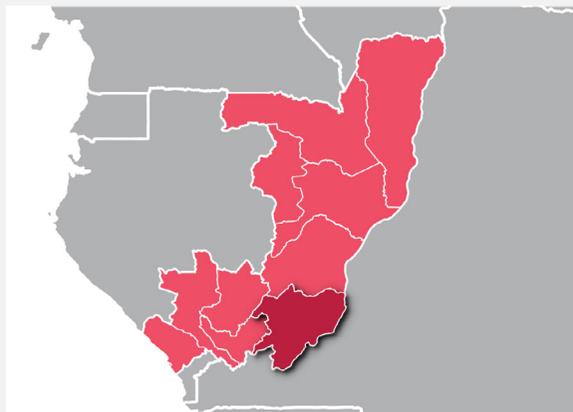
Shelter & NFIs

Shelter needs are likely to increase country-wide in 2018. Villages are frequently burnt down in fighting, which limits the possibility for returns and creates shelter needs. The majority of IDPs are likely to live in host communities, which further strains the resources of already vulnerable local communities. Shelter needs are also likely due to overcrowded conditions at IDP camps, as well as people temporarily displaced who hide in the bush in the most conflict-affected areas.

CONGO

The humanitarian situation in the Pool department of the Republic of Congo deteriorated in 2017 as the insurgency by the Ninja militia, which was revived in 2016 and fuelled by long-standing ethnic grievances, gained momentum. IDPs increased six-fold between June 2016 and May 2017. The Ninja militia was previously active between 1998 and 2005, but disbanded in 2008. The current insurgency is linked to the political crisis, which has been unfolding in Congo since 2015. Following Sassou Nguesso's re-election in 2016, arson attacks on administrative buildings in a neighbourhood of Brazzaville previously known for its Ninja presence prompted the government to launch an offensive in Pool in April 2016. Food security, livelihoods, and health needs are high and likely to remain so in 2018 due to continued conflict and lack of access.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Revival of the Ninja insurgency
Government offensive started in Pool department in 2016, the militia's stronghold between 1998 and 2005

Political crisis
Since 2015, when the president ran for a third term despite having already served his two-term limit

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Conflict is likely to continue in the Pool region in 2018, causing additional displacement and acute needs.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Displacement

Food security & livelihoods

Health

OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

In 2017, a deterioration of the security situation in the Pool department was reported, driven by a 2016 **revival of the insurgency** of the Ninja, a militia group opposed to President Sassou Nguesso. Pool, in the southeast of the country, is a vulnerable area traditionally opposed to the president whose power base is in the north (UN Country Team et al. 23/06/2017; Legal Aid Board 28/04/2009; HRP 2017). As a major stronghold of the opposition in the 1993-1999 civil war, the area has never fully recovered from the conflict.

The Ninja militia was active in Pool between 1998 and 2005. It had officially disbanded in 2008, although some hardline elements were believed to still be active though weak (ACLED 02/2017; Karaszia 2015). In 2016, the government launched a new offensive in Pool following arson attacks on administrative buildings in a previous Ninja stronghold of Brazzaville (Clark/Decalo 2012). While the government blamed the Ninja for these attacks, the perpetrators were not identified (US State Department 2016). The attacks came after the presidential election, which saw Sassou Nguesso win a third term despite widespread protests. The election was the culmination of a **political crisis** that started in late 2015 when the president forced a constitutional amendment allowing him to run for a third term rather than the two-term limit. In 2017, the political opposition outside Pool took the conflict as an opportunity to revamp protests, and 2017 saw a series of events demonstrating against the government crackdown in Pool. At the same time, Ninja attacks causing a high number of casualties among security forces were reported in the area (African Arguments 20/06/2017). While information on Pool remains sparse, highlighting a lack of access to the area due to conflict, it is generally accepted that the conflict is ongoing. Some early signs of a willingness on the part of the government to negotiate have been reported. The president called on the Ninja militia to lay down arms on 3 October, established corridors to transport wounded Ninjas out of Pool, and released some associates of Pastor Ntumi, the leader of the Ninja (Jeune Afrique 03/10/2017; Mediacongo 15/11/2017). However the significance of these developments is not yet known.

The political crisis is compounded by an economic decline, ongoing since 2015. Falling global oil prices diminished Congo's revenues by 54% in 2015. After recording economic growth of 6% in 2014, the economy has been in recession since 2015 (Africa Confidential 22/09/2017). In August 2017, the IMF disclosed that the Congolese debt reaches 120% of its GDP, not 77% as previously believed (Jeune Afrique 06/08/2017). Congo risks a liquidity crisis. Sassou Nguesso's regime, in power since 1979 except for five years between 1992 and 1997, has been accused of squandering oil revenues for massive infrastructure projects and personal enrichment. The instability in the Pool department is also impacting the national economy, as major railway lines and roads connecting the south and the north have been affected by insecurity. Fuel and domestic gas supply has been disrupted (HRP 2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The drivers for 2017 are likely to remain relevant for 2018. Continued military activities by the government in Pool are likely to motivate the Ninja militia, who may receive or force support from the population of Pool. Increased local support will likely prompt a violent reaction by the government, thereby intensifying and possibly expanding conflict, and hindering access. The political opposition is likely to use the discontent over the economic situation and the continued conflict in Pool to rally more support, as it has done in 2017.

As ethnic grievances in the country remain, violence could spike in other areas in the south of the country where the president's support is traditionally low. Should the political opposition be strengthened by the continued insurgency, the president may try to reach a settlement with the Ninja militia. However, it is unclear if the recent goodwill gestures by the government are early signs of this, and for the moment, the conflict is likely to continue.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Displacement

As conflict continues, new displacements are likely to occur in 2018 as the destruction of villages has been used as a war tactic (HRP 2017). One in three people in the affected districts is displaced, although the number may be underestimated as it is based only on accessible areas (HRP 2017). Needs among current IDPs are likely to increase as pressure on assistance mounts due to growing numbers. Moreover, more displacement is likely to result if conflict expands beyond the eight currently affected districts.

Health

With high food insecurity and malnutrition rates, there is likely to be a need for medical assistance, especially for IDPs. 35% of health facilities in Pool were closed due to insecurity, and with continued conflict there are likely to be more closures. As a resurgence of measles and cholera has been reported due to low vaccination coverage and poor health infrastructure and sanitation, the provision of vaccines is likely to be a major need going forward (HRP 2017).

Food security & livelihoods

Over half of the population in Pool needs food and livelihood assistance, and the situation is likely to deteriorate in 2018 as conflict continues and access is likely to be limited. Agricultural activities have been disrupted, impacting food availability and access as well as the livelihoods of a majority of Pool's population (HRP 2017; WFP 04/2017).

DRC
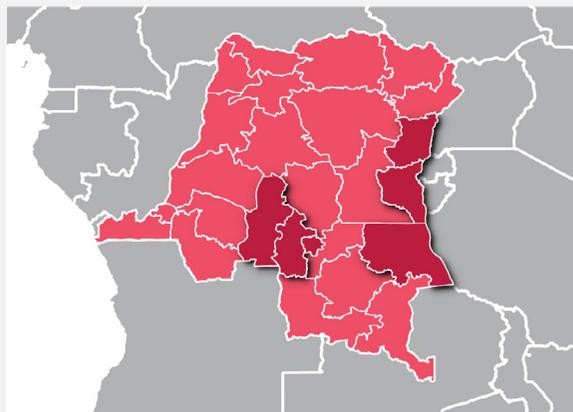
The security situation deteriorated throughout the country in 2017, particularly in the Kasai region during the first half of the year and in the eastern provinces in the second half of the year. In 2017, clashes between armed militias and government forces as well as intercommunal conflict have led to massive displacement and the disruption of agricultural, health, and education systems in all areas affected by violence. Whereas 922,000 people were recorded as newly displaced in 2016, the number recorded in 2017 has already reached 1.7 million. Increased intercommunal violence, a new alliance of armed militias, and large-scale return movements coupled with deteriorated humanitarian access in 2017 will likely result in a higher number of newly displaced and increased food security and protection needs in 2018.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Intercommunal violence
Intercommunal conflicts have escalated in the Greater Kasai region and in Tanganyika

Returnees
Flows of returnees to Kasai have found themselves in high need of cross-sector humanitarian assistance

New alliance of militias
Following the unification of armed militias under an umbrella group, insecurity has increased in the Kivus

Deteriorating access
Increased insecurity has forced several humanitarian actors to suspend service delivery to people in need

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Postponement of elections to December 2018 is likely to result in increased frustration among the population, triggering further violence, displacement, and more people in need.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Protection

Displacement

Food security & livelihoods

OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

An institutional and political crisis has had an impact on the population of DRC since 2016. The situation deteriorated in 2017, largely due to President Kabila's refusal to step down from power at the end of his term, triggering an increase in violence and the development of new conflict dynamics, notably in long-standing opposition strongholds including the Greater Kasai region and areas in both Nord- and Sud-Kivu and Tanganyika. In particular, a change of tone has been observed in the speech of several armed groups, shifting from local to national grievances (Reuters 29/09/2017). Fighting of armed groups among themselves and against FARDC, coupled with atrocities against civilians by all parties led to the displacement of over 1.7 million people in 2017 and disrupted already weak health, education, and agricultural systems (OCHA 04/11/2017). Decline of the national currency, which lost over 55% of its value in 2017, and increased prices of basic products including food are another consequence of the political instability (La Libre Afrique 12/09/2017).

Following the violent insurrection of Kamuina Nsapu militia against the government in Kasai Central province in August 2016, simmering **inter-communal tensions** escalated and fighting spread through the entire Kasai region as well as other provinces such as Lomami and Sankuru in the first half of 2017 (OCHA 12/05/2017). Widespread violence internally displaced over 1.4 million people and a further 46,000 people fled to Angola. Public services including health and education facilities have been severely affected. Agricultural production has been disrupted and impacted food security (UNHCR 12/09/2017; OCHA 11/08/2017).

The security situation improved in Kasai in the second half of the year, and over 630,000 people returned to their areas of origin in 2017. **Returnees** find themselves in precarious conditions due to destruction of main infrastructure and the disruption of agriculture as well as health and education systems. Despite a decrease in the intensity of the conflict since the middle of the year, the security situation remains volatile and unpredictable, with the threat of rising intercommunal tensions over scarce resources (IOM 30/09/2017).

A volatile security situation in the eastern part of the country, particularly in Nord- and Sud-Kivu, has persisted for two decades. Encouraged by the widespread and growing frustration due to Kabila's refusal to step down, **several armed militias decided in June 2017 to ally their forces** under an umbrella group and formed the National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC) with the overarching objective to oust President Kabila (Reuters 01/10/2017).

The downsizing of MONUSCO (United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) through the second half of the year has mainly affected Nord-Kivu and the move is likely to increase the overall security challenges even though the direct impact is difficult to assess (UNSC 02/10/2017). Since May, when insecurity started to increase, **humanitarian access** has significantly deteriorated, leaving IDPs and Burundian refugees without assistance (UNHCR 29/09/2017).

The conflict between Twa and Bantu communities began in 2012, first affecting Manono territory before escalating and spreading to the territories of Nyunzu and Kabalo from 2013 to 2015. Following a brief stabilisation of the situation due to international intervention, including MONUSCO at the end of 2015, violence re-escalated in the second half of 2016 and continued into 2017, further spreading to Kalemie and Moba territories (IRC 31/08/2017).

Violent conflict has resulted in 654,000 internally displaced people, including 277,000 recorded in 2017 alone. 480,000 of those displaced are located in Kalemie and Nyunzu territories (OCHA 04/11/2017). These IDPs are living in highly precarious conditions as 80% do not have access to drinking water (VOA 02/11/2017). In 2017 food insecurity has been on the rise throughout the province due to lack of access to food and disruption of agricultural activities.

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

As President Kabila is unlikely to step down before 2019, increasing grievances amongst the civil population are likely to cause violent protests throughout the country. The widespread frustration is also likely to be used by armed groups to gain popular support.

In 2018, the new CNPSC militia coalition coupled with the downsizing of MONUSCO is likely to contribute to an increase of the insecurity in the eastern part of the country.

In Kasai and Tanganyika, inter-communal conflicts will likely continue and even further escalate in 2018. Cross-sector needs of returnees are likely to last throughout 2018 as reconstruction of basic infrastructure will take months.

Beyond physical constraints due to lack of roads, which are always heightened during the rainy season, the access situation will remain highly dependent on security developments.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Protection

Militia groups previously focused on local grievances will likely become increasingly frustrated by the national, political, and socioeconomic situation and are likely to increase violence, particularly against government forces and institutions. In the first half of 2017, 2,822 human rights violations were recorded, a 20% increase compared with 2016 (MONUSCO 25/07/2017). Tensions over scarce resources are likely to trigger more intercommunal clashes. In 2018 protection needs will be high in this volatile security context and atrocities against civilians are likely to increase.

Displacement

Displacement within the country will continue. As of end October 4.1 million people were displaced including 1.7 million in 2017 (OCHA 04/11/2017). The scale of the displacement including returns will depend on the evolution of the security situation. The refugee influx from CAR and South Sudan is likely to keep increasing. In September 2017 there were 85,400 South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR 30/09/2017) and 167,300 CAR refugees (UNHCR 30/09/2017) up from respectively 53,900 and 96,000 at end September 2016 (UNHCR 30/09/2016).

Food security & livelihoods

Food security is likely to be negatively impacted by an increase in violence and resulting displacement. This would limit access to fields and lead to loss of livelihoods. The economic situation is unlikely to improve, and food prices will continue to rise. In 2017 there are 7.7 million food insecure people throughout the country, a 30% increase from 2016. Over 33% of the total population (919,391 people) are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and 4) (FAO 12/11/2017).

ETHIOPIA

The humanitarian situation has changed dramatically since the beginning of 2017. The Somali region was most affected by the drought, which caused poor harvests, limiting food availability, and resulting in large livestock losses. Livestock losses had a significant impact on the region, which is largely pastoralist, resulting in reduced purchasing power and consequently food access.

Loss of livelihoods and decreased resilience following the drought in 2017 will drive continued food insecurity and nutritional needs in 2018. WASH will also likely, particularly in the Somali region.

Inter-communal conflicts flared up on the Somali-Oromia border, causing internal displacement and in the latter part of the year anti-government protests similar to those in 2016 resurfaced.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Consecutive poor rainfalls in October - December 2016 and March-May 2017 have led to drought

Loss of pastoral livelihoods in the largely pastoralist Somali region reduced household food access in 2017

Unaddressed grievances regarding the marginalisation, oppression, and political exclusion of ethnic groups has led to renewed tensions with the government

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition are likely to continue in the Somali region. Insecurity may increase as tensions between ethnic groups and the government continue.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

WASH

Nutrition

OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

Food security sharply deteriorated in 2017 following the **failure of both rainy seasons** in the southern pastoral region. This led to reduced harvests and pasture shortages, resulting in the number of food insecure people rising from 5.6 million in January to 12.5 million in October (ECHO 26/10/17).

In the Somali region, where pastoral farming is relied on for income and subsequently access to food, **significant pastoral losses** occurred. In June, herd sizes were up to 70% below average due to high animal mortality rates. Poor body conditions of livestock and lack of food and water also caused a sharp decline in milk production (Giews 28/9/17). The impact of this is long-term with cattle production taking up to ten months from a good rainy season to improve and up to two-four years for herd sizes to replenish. This would mean limited access to food for the foreseeable future.

Another factor limiting food availability is the presence of the Fall Armyworm, which has already infested 26% of maize crops and may lead to up to 20-30% of a reduction in national maize production in the next harvest. So far, efforts to control the outbreak have not been successful. Only 43% of the area infested has been treated with pesticide. 2 million hectares of planted crop is at risk of being infected. (DRMTWG 15/11/17) (DRMTWG 30/09/17)

This current food security crisis was preceded by the 2015/2016 el niño induced drought, which caused excessive crop failure in the north and east of the country. A strong government response supported by an international response helped to avert famine but it also

depleted resources, with the result that both national and international response to this second round of drought has been limited and delayed (DRMTWG 30/09/17).

A state of emergency was in place until August 2017 following the Oromo protests of 2016. The protests were sparked in response to a plan to expand the territory of Addis Ababa into neighboring Oromo villages, but they were also more generally against the continued marginalisation and political exclusion of the Oromo people. The protests decreased during the state of emergency, but there was an increase in ethnic militant activity. Forty ethnic militant clashes occurred between January and July this year, compared with six during the protest period. This could point to a change in strategy from peaceful protests to an armed struggle (ACLED 06/17).

When the state of emergency was lifted in August, there were fears that protests might resume as the pre-existing **grievances remained unaddressed**. Instead, inter-communal conflict flared on the Oromo-Somali border displacing over 225,000 people and causing hundreds of civilian deaths (IFRC 22/11/17). Long-standing tensions between the two communities, driven by land disputes and competition over access to resources, led to violent clashes. Oromia officials implicated the government-backed ethnic Somali paramilitary group, the Liyu police. However, the Somali regional authorities rejected this, accusing the Oromia government of sympathising with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a group seeking self-determination for Oromos. Some Oromo activists have claimed that the government was behind the clashes and that they are deliberately

mobilising the Liyu police to create tensions between ethnic groups. In the past, the use of lethal force by the government against protestors has led to a sense of shared oppression between the Oromo and other ethnic groups and it is possible that the government wants to suppress this. Access to the affected areas has been highly restricted by the government and information about the violence and the needs resulting from it has been difficult to obtain. Anti-government protests in the Oromia region resumed on 11 October and the country continues to experience pockets of anti-government protests against the marginalisation of the ethnic Oromo and Amhara groups, suggesting a resumption of the previous unrest.

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Food insecurity is likely to persist in the Somali region following poor harvests in 2017. Livestock losses have reduced purchasing power and food accessibility for pastoral households. Deyr rains had delayed onset in October but were strong in November, contributing to greater water availability for livestock and pasture. However, vegetation conditions remain significantly below-average across southeastern Ethiopia and pastures are likely to be exhausted earlier than in normal years, meaning food aid will be needed as early as January 2018 (Fewsnet 10/11/17) (DRMTWG 15/11/17). Even with good rains, cattle production will take 10 months to recover, continuing to limit access to food.

A continued spread of fall armyworms is likely, which will impact 2018 harvests. Existing trends suggest that government response to future drought will be weaker than previous response and the resilience of the population will be weakened because of the earlier drought. These factors will increase the necessity for international response in 2018.

Security is unlikely to improve. Upon the state of emergency being lifted, a negative change in the security situation in the country could be seen. Based on the continued grievances, which remain unaddressed, and the reemergence of pockets of protest, it is likely that this trend of violent protests will continue and possibly worsen in 2018.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

The reduced output of 2017 harvests, decreased food access as a result of poor purchasing power, and the exhaustion of coping mechanisms all point to a poor outlook for 2018. This would be further aggravated if rains are poor. Many households currently facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes are at risk of moving into Famine (IPC Phase 5) without sustained humanitarian assistance. Emergency livestock intervention will be required until the next major rainy season in April/May 2018.

Nutrition

In 2017, there were around 375,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition in children under five and 3.6 million cases of moderate acute malnutrition, with the Somali region most affected. Similarly high numbers are likely for 2018 given the lack of improvement in food security, decreasing resilience, and the potential of another dry season.

WASH

10.5 million people currently require WASH support and this sector will remain a priority in 2018. In addition to supplying emergency water, a key priority is the rehabilitation of permanent water systems as drought and water shortages are recurrent in Ethiopia. The availability of clean water and promotion of sanitation practices is critical to minimise public health outbreaks in 2018. Scarcity of water will also lead to further livestock deaths contributing to livelihood losses and greater food insecurity in 2018.

IRAQ

Iraqi and Kurdish forces regained substantial territory from the Islamic State (IS) in 2017, reducing the group's territorial control from 40% of the country at its peak in 2014, to a small area of desert along the Syria/Iraq border. With the loss of its last stronghold in Iraq, IS will likely continue shifting toward the use of non-traditional conflict strategies and improvised attacks. The military operations against IS resulted in significant displacement. The referendum on Kurdish independence has partly diverted attention from IS and toward longstanding tensions between Erbil and Baghdad, which will likely cause political and security concerns in 2018, and detract from immediate protection and reconstruction needs following the end of the battle against IS. Internal displacement, and return movement to newly liberated areas, are likely to continue into 2018. Protection and livelihoods will be priority needs.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

New government offensives
The Iraqi government launched offensives to retake areas previously held by IS

Shifting IS tactics
As IS has been losing territorial control, it has been shifting to non-traditional strategies and improvised attacks

State fragmentation
The Kurdish vote for independence on 25 September has escalated tensions between Erbil and Baghdad

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Improvised IS attacks and tensions between Erbil and Baghdad are likely to continue in 2018.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Displacement

Protection

Food security & livelihoods

CURRENT SITUATION

Large offensives on IS strongholds continued in 2017, with Iraqi and Kurdish forces effectively retaking all IS-held areas in Iraq at the beginning of November. However, the referendum on Kurdish independence held on 25 September has diverted some attention from the conflict between IS and government forces, toward renewed tensions surrounding state fragmentation.

The Iraqi government alongside the Iran-backed Shia Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and Kurdish Pesh-merga forces launched several **new offensives** through-out 2017 to retake IS territory. As of mid-November, Iraqi forces succeeded in driving IS out of all its major strongholds across the country, with only some IS mil-itants remaining in sparsely populated rural areas. The loss of territory has **pushed IS to shift to non-traditional strategies and improvised attacks,** and resulted in an increase of IS attacks in other areas of the country (Washington Post 17/11/2017).

The battle for Mosul began in October 2016, and con-tinued until mid-2017. Iraqi forces regained control of eastern Mosul by January, but protracted fighting in western Mosul between IS and Iraqi forces continued until 10 July, when Mosul was officially declared liber-ated from IS control. The Mosul conflict led to the inter-nal displacement of over one million people (Handicap International 29/06/2017). After Mosul, the Iraqi government and Kurdish forces made rapid progress in retaking the areas of Tal Afar, Hawija, and al Qaim. At the beginning of November, Iraqi and Kurdish forces took control of the last IS stronghold in Anbar province on the border with Syria, following the battle to control formerly IS-held Rawa city. With the successful operation to retake con-trol of the last IS stronghold in Iraq, Iraqi and Kurdish forces effectively cleared all urban enclaves from IS control. As of mid-November, Iraqi forces continue to conduct operations in sparsely populated rural areas where IS militants remain on the border with Syria.

Despite strong opposition from Iran, Turkey, the EU, US, and UN, a referendum on the independence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) was held on 25 Septem-ber, resulting in a strong majority casting a 'yes' vote. Despite the result being non-binding, it has been criti-cised for being unconstitutional, unilateral, and divisive, and has escalated tensions between Erbil and Baghdad around **state fragmentation** ahead of the parliamentary elections in 2018. In addition to escalating tensions between Baghdad and Erbil, the referendum also exac-erbated divisions between Kurdish factions. In response to the Kurdish referendum, neighbouring countries have threatened sanctions, Iraq closed Kurdistan airspace, and Iraqi troops with Iranian and Turkish counterparts conducted a joint military manoeuvre on their borders (ICG 17/10/2017).

Increased state fragmentation following the referen-dum has hardened all sides' positions and prompted new offensives in Kirkuk's oil rich province. Iraqi forces launched an operation to retake the oil rich city of Kirkuk on 16 October, a multi-ethnic city that has been held by the Kurds since 2014, when Iraqi forces collapsed under pressure from IS. This operation was made possible by Iraqi forces retaking formerly IS-controlled Hawija, a district town in Kirkuk governorate, in October, bringing them closer to Kirkuk city and oil fields. The operation was also driven by the Iraqi government's desire to reas-sert Iraqi sovereignty over these areas (ICG 17/10/2017). Iraqi forces completed their takeover of Kirkuk province at the end of October (Reuters 20/10/2017).

This action prompted large-scale temporary displace-ment of over 180,000 people in the disputed territories, which was already hosting over 350,000 IDPs (UNHCR 02/11/2017). The Kurdistan region also hosts the major-ity of the Syrian refugees in Iraq, who are impacted by deteriorating security.

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Despite IS' defeat in Iraq, pockets of insecurity are likely to remain. IS is likely to continue to carry out improvised attacks throughout the country to destabilise the government and exploit tensions.

In advance of the parliamentary elections in May 2018, different factions in Iraq's Kurdistan will likely attempt to increase political and military leverage, making clashes between Iraqi forces and PMU, and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces in disputed territories more likely. Mediation from international actors will likely be required to prevent an outbreak of violence, which would detract from addressing humanitarian concerns in heavily conflict-affected areas previously held by IS.

Tensions are likely to increase between Turkey/Iran, which clearly oppose Kurdistan statehood, and the KRI. This may result in increased humanitarian needs for the Kurdish population and Syrian refugees in Turkey and the KRI.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Displacement

Over 3 million people remain displaced throughout Iraq from conflict, many since 2014. The rate of returns has increased throughout 2017, with nearly 1 million people returning to their places of origin since January, bringing the total number of returnees to over 2.6 million (IOM 15/11/2017). This trend is likely to continue into 2018 despite significant shelter, protection, and livelihood concerns in their places of origin. Perceived improvement in the security situation and poor conditions in camps are mainly driving returns.

Protection

In 2018, protection needs in newly liberated areas are likely to remain a priority concern. 3.9 million people were in need of protection assistance in mid-2017 (OCHA 06/2017). The number has likely increased in territory retaken from IS, where returnees and IDPs face severe protection concerns. Newly liberated areas are highly contaminated with UXO and booby traps. Detention of women and children who surrendered with IS fighters is a protection concern, as is the potential for retributive action against them.

Food security & livelihoods

Livelihood opportunities in IS held areas have been lacking, leading affected populations to rely on savings and subsistence agriculture for survival. Livelihood opportunities for people in protracted displacement are particularly poor (FAO 30/01/2017). Many people are accruing debts in order to meet their basic needs, a coping strategy that is likely to increase in 2018 (REACH 17/09/2017).

LIBYA

The security situation in Libya deteriorated in 2017, particularly in Sabratha, Benghazi, Sirte, and central and southern Libya, resulting in displacement, market disruptions, and limitations on health access. In Derna the siege of the Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Khalifa Haftar, was tightened and movement restrictions remain in force. The security situation is likely to deteriorate in 2018: IS is regrouping in southern Libya, Sirte region, Al Jufra, and Misrata; the LNA is gaining more control over territories and resources; and the implementation of EU migration policies led to the closure of the Mediterranean route, leaving migrants in the hands of the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) and armed militias. Migrants are likely to continue to be subjected to illegal detentions and human rights abuses. Conflict, access constraints, and the disrupted procurement system will likely increase protection, health, and livelihood needs in 2018.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

IS regrouping
Islamic State is reorganising in southern Libya, Misrata, and Sirte region, also taking advantage of the tensions between the LNA and Misratan forces

Haftar/LNA as dominant political actor
LNA gained territory and control of the country's central oil facilities, and Haftar gained legitimacy as a political figure

EU migration policy
EU migration policies empowered the LCG to manage migration flows; LCG lacks the capacity and will to respond to migrants' needs

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

The security situation is likely to deteriorate in 2018 as the GNA is struggling to exert its authority, which is likely to give more space to the LNA and armed militias to exercise power.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Protection

Health

Food security & livelihoods

CURRENT SITUATION

Negotiations to resolve the conflict in Libya showed signs of progress in early July 2017 when Libyan National Army (LNA) leader General Khalifa Haftar and Libya's head of the presidential council and prime minister of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), Fayez Serraj, agreed on a ceasefire and to hold elections in 2018. The agreement calls for a ceasefire with the exception of the LNA and GNA combating IS. However, clashes continued among different parties throughout 2017, including the LNA, Misratan militias, GNA-led forces, and IS forces. The protraction of violence all over the country undermined the limited progress made by the UN peace process and opened a window of opportunity for **IS to regroup**. Insecurity, the lack of a state authority, and the fragmented political dynamics had a considerable impact on the country's humanitarian situation, with access still limited.

LNA leader General Khalifa Haftar started to gain significant power as a political and military actor in 2014 at the beginning of Operation Dignity, a military operation to fight Benghazi Islamist militias related to the General National Congress (GNC). In 2017, **following LNA's territorial gains, Haftar strengthened his control and political influence** in the country, especially in the east and in the oil crescent region of Sirte. In the same year, the LNA, Misratan militias, and the GNA were engaged in fighting IS in Sirte, Benghazi, and Derna. Although the LNA had a number of victories in battles with IS and other Islamist armed groups it has not been able to eradicate IS. As of end of 2017 the LNA and Haftar have not had the political and military capability to stabilise the country. If the support by international stakeholders

such as France, Italy, Egypt, and the US increase during 2018, Haftar is likely to increase capacities (CT 1/8/17). Despite new US military actions to counter IS in Libya, it is regrouping in Sirte and Bani Walid. After the group lost control of Mosul in July and of ar-Raqqa at the beginning of October, significant numbers of IS fighters are expected to move from Iraq and Syria to Libya (The Independent, 27/07/2017). In October 2017, there were a number of IS attacks in the key cities of Tripoli, Misrata, and Ajdabiya and the group's presence has been reported in Al Jufra, southern Libya since August. Sirte is known as IS' stronghold in Libya. Sabratha, Benghazi, and Tripoli, as well as the south have been Libya's main hotspots of violence in 2017. The LNA siege on the coastal city of Derna, in place since May 2016, has been tightened in 2017. Humanitarian access restrictions are still being used as war tactics, with the people in need of health assistance the most affected by these constraints (OCHA, 6/11/2017).

The deteriorating situation creates further insecurity for the over 43,600 registered refugees and asylum seekers and over 400,000 identified migrants (UNHCR 16/11/2017; IOM 31/10/2017). In total there are an estimated 700,000 to one million migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who live in or transit through the country. Smuggling and trafficking of migrants is a common practice among militias and Islamist armed groups, and is regularly used as a source of income. The latest **EU migration agreements** with/on Libya to curb illegal migration and smuggling, such as the February 2017 Malta Declaration, led to a slight decrease in arrivals to Europe compared to 2016. The suspension of rescue activities at sea by several

NGOs for security reasons also led to the decrease of migrant arrivals to Europe. As of early November, about 114,600 migrants arrived in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route, compared to 164,800 in the same period last year. However, the number of migrant arrivals to Libya has not decreased. A lack of or false information about the migrant situation in Libya in sub-Saharan African countries contributes to a continuing flow of migrants and refugees to Libya. The LCG, the LNA, and local militias are becoming significant actors for the EU Member States' strategy to reduce illegal migration as they have considerable influence in regulating departures. However, those actors have not shown that they have the means or will to protect migrants. Around 20,000 migrants were being held in official and unofficial detention centres in 2017 in Sabratha alone, with no or limited access to food, healthcare, or legal protection (Le Monde Afrique, 17/10/2017; UNHCR 16/11/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The main drivers of the current humanitarian situation will remain in 2018, with General Khalifa Haftar strengthening his power, particularly in LNA-controlled territories of eastern Libya, such as Benghazi, Tobruk, and al-Beyda. Although general elections are scheduled to be held in 2018, they are unlikely to lead to political stability due to the already divided state structure and the difficulties for the different political groups to form a sole government. Militias are likely to continue fighting in Libya's key cities in order to secure their interests and impose their position in negotiations. It is likely that armed groups in Libya will continue shifting sides and establishing alliances based on economic interests.

While the LNA and other forces fight in Libya's main cities, IS is likely to strengthen its control in the south and to launch new attacks in its bid for control over territories and resources. Both militias and IS will likely continue to target fuel and water facilities.

It is likely that migrants and asylum seekers travelling to or transiting through Libya will continue to be held in detention centres upon their arrival by authorities and local militias. If they attempt to cross to Europe they are likely to be intercepted by the LCG or to die at sea.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Protection

Protection issues such as illegal detention, torture, mass executions, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and slavery are likely to increase in 2018 based on the deterioration of the security situation and the possible regrouping of IS. Migrants and asylum seekers are likely to continue to be at particular risk as they are exposed to violence by Libyan security forces, militias, and smuggling networks. Mines and ERWs are still present, mostly in Benghazi, and are likely to remain a security issue.

Health

Access to healthcare is likely to remain a situation of major concern in Libya for 2018, especially in conflict-affected areas. Lack of human resources and shortages of medical supplies continue to be a problem. The situation is likely to deteriorate due to the lack of fuel to run hospitals in Derna and southern Libya. Migrants in legal and illegal detention centres do not have access to health assistance despite their vulnerability to WASH-related diseases. As the number of detained migrants is likely to increase in 2018, health access for migrants is likely to further deteriorate.

Food security & livelihoods

Protracted conflict and disrupted procurement and distribution systems in Libya are having a negative impact on livelihoods. The situation is likely to further deteriorate due to the lack of liquidity, high food and NFI prices, and the depreciation of the Libyan dinar on the black market. Restrictions on movement affect livelihoods in besieged Derna, where over 100,000 people live. In 2018, a larger number of people are likely to adopt negative coping systems, such as migrant and goods smuggling, due to the limited financial resources.

MALI

In 2017 the security situation has significantly deteriorated in central and northern Mali resulting in increased food insecurity, large-scale displacement, market disruptions, and school closures. The growing lack of state presence has allowed for the increase of armed banditry, as well as the rise of Islamist armed groups in central Mali as they are building on socioeconomic grievances to gain support from the local population. The reach of the armed groups is likely to continue to expand in 2018, increasing insecurity and protection, displacement, and food security needs of local populations in Mali as well as across the borders to northern Burkina Faso and western Niger. In the north, gaps in the implementation of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement have further increased grievances and violence in the region in 2017.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

New alliance of armed groups
The alliance of major Islamist armed groups under an umbrella organisation has strengthened their capacities

Withdrawal of state
The lack of capacity of the national military and state withdrawal has deepened the population's resentment

Counter-effective anti extremism measures
Security measures imposed to fight extremism feeds the resentment of the affected population towards the state

Intercommunal violence
The increasing scarcity of resources due to the disruption of livelihood activities has increased intercommunal violence

Blocked peace process
The 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement is failing as ceasefire violations are increasing since the middle of 2017

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

The security and humanitarian situation will likely deteriorate in Mali in 2018 as a result of progressive state withdrawal from the central region throughout 2017.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Protection

Displacement

Food security & livelihoods

CURRENT SITUATION

In 2017 violence has significantly increased in Mali, particularly in the centre of the country which had previously been relatively secure compared to the north. With 185 fatalities recorded throughout the country, June was the most violent month since early 2013. The humanitarian situation in both north and central Mali continues to deteriorate because of the growing insecurity.

In Mopti and Segou regions in central Mali, the increase in violence that started around two years ago has accelerated in 2017 (HRW 05/04/2017). This can be explained by a spillover of the continuing conflict in the north since 2012 along with an historical lack of state presence in the area.

The creation of an umbrella organisation, the Group of Support to Muslims and Islam (GSIM), has enabled Islamist armed groups traditionally active in the north to expand their activities to the central part of the country (Long War Journal 18/03/2017; ACLED 04/2017). Systematic attacks from those groups against local government representatives and other government institutions resulted in an **increasing withdrawal of the state** in a region that has historically been lacking state presence. This withdrawal, coupled with a dedication of resources to the north since 2012 had already contributed to the marginalisation of the area, resulting in local resentment of the state authority (HRW 18/01/2017). Several **security measures imposed by the Malian government**, such as a motorcycle ban, directly impede on economic activity and access to services, further increasing discontent among the affected population.

The increasingly tense security and economic situation in central Mali has contributed to enhanced competition over scarce resources and the creation of local self-defense groups, both of which have fuelled an **increase in inter-communal violence** (ICG 06/07/2017).

The **gaps in the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement**, signed in 2015 by the pro-government Platform, the opposition group Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), and the government has further increased grievances and violence in the region. The main issues are the failure to establish interim authorities and effectively implement joint patrols to provide security. In July, severe fighting between the Platform and CMA resumed and several attacks against national and international forces were reported, notably in Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu (UNSC 28/09/2017).

The increasingly volatile and insecure environment in Mali has direct repercussions on northern Burkina Faso and western Niger. Due to porous borders, Islamist armed groups are able to operate in these two neighbouring countries, significantly deteriorating the population's access to basic services (UNICEF 29/06/2017; Le Monde 01/06/2017).

In Burkina Faso, where Oudalan and Soum regions are the most affected by the rise in violence, a worrying change of dynamic has been observed as Islamist militants are increasingly attacking civilians, specifically targeting schools and putting children and teachers at risk (ACLED 10/2017). In Tillaberi and Tahoua regions in western Niger a state of emergency was declared in

March, due to the presence of Islamist armed groups restricting movement and constraining humanitarian access (Niameyetles2jours 17/09/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

As state actors are likely to continue to withdraw from conflict areas in central Mali, Islamist armed groups are expected to take advantage of the lack of government presence. They are likely to recruit more intensively among the local population and to further spread their influence.

The deployment of the international force of the G5 Sahel, bringing together the forces of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad, will result in more fighting as this force will likely clash with armed groups. In turn this is likely to lead to an increase in human rights violations as have previously been seen in other counter-offensives against activities by non-state armed groups in the area.

The highly volatile security context is likely to result in a deteriorating humanitarian situation and to increase the needs for protection, food, health, and education.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Protection

Human rights violations by national, local, and Islamist armed groups were regularly reported in 2017 and will likely be on the rise in 2018. The increasing insecurity in central Mali is likely to lead to an increase in protection issues such as extra-judicial executions, torture, and gender-based violence. Communities suspected of supporting armed groups, such as Fulani, are at risk of being indiscriminately targeted.

Displacement

The increase of violence is likely to result in displacement from the centre and north of the country but also in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Over 42,000 new displacements linked to conflict were recorded in the first half of 2017 whereas a decrease in the number of displaced was observed in 2016 (IDMC 30/06/2017). A significant influx of displaced persons in regions already facing scarcity of resources is likely to leave the displaced in precarious conditions and to put additional pressure on host communities.

Food security & livelihoods

Food insecurity is likely to increase in areas affected by conflict, namely central and northern regions. Disruption of farming activities is in turn likely to diminish the population's resilience to environmental hazards affecting crop production. The situation is particularly concerning for the agricultural region of Segou; its produce and market are essential both at the regional and national level. Sustained violence in 2018 is likely to further disrupt the agricultural system and therefore escalate food insecurity in affected areas.

NIGERIA: BORNO
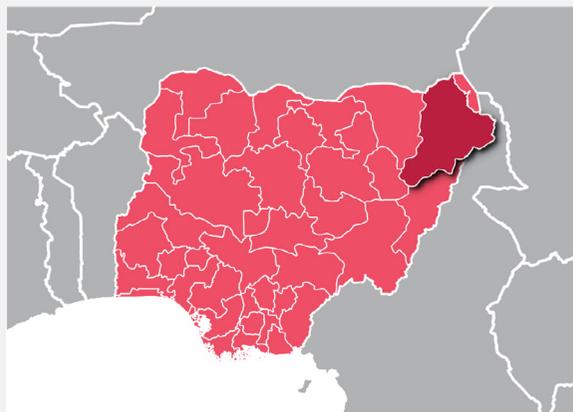
Humanitarian access constraints across the northeast have continued despite a significant change in conflict dynamics. The conflict shifted from organised, large-scale attacks characterised by prolonged armed clashes to more sporadic attacks such as suicide bombings. This shift is directly linked to Boko Haram's significant loss of ground in 2016. It has limited the humanitarian operational space across the northeast while also limiting those in need from accessing vital services. Internal displacement and return movement is straining resources. The shift in conflict dynamics is likely to remain throughout 2018 and continue to limit the access situation and drive food security and health needs. In addition, key infrastructure such as health, education, and livelihood facilities remain significantly damaged from the ongoing conflict.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Increased sporadic attacks
Conflict dynamics shifted from organised, large-scale attacks to more sporadic attacks, prolonging restricted access

Returnees and IDPs
High numbers of IDPs and the steady flow of returnees continue to strain resources

Damaged infrastructure
caused by ongoing conflict has compounded needs across sectors including health, education, livelihoods, food security

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Conflict dynamics in 2018, with a shift to more sporadic attacks, will continue to restrict humanitarian access and exacerbate the needs of those affected.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

Access

Health

CURRENT SITUATION

This year has seen a shift in conflict dynamics since January, when the government prematurely announced the defeat of Boko Haram (BH), with an increase of suicide bombings and IED attacks by the armed group. Despite the claimed victory, the number of security incidents has stayed at the same level seen in 2016, but with a shift away from organised, large-scale attacks characterised by prolonged armed clashes to **increased sporadic attacks** such as suicide bombings.

The two most notable conventional attacks occurred in September in Bama and Logumani where BH launched significant forces at government force outposts. This can be seen as an indicator of BH's ongoing military capacity in the northeast although it may be limited. BH has significantly increased the number of suicide bombings that have used children and infants to carry out the attacks compared to the past three years. This is an indicator that as BH moves more toward improvised tactics they are becoming increasingly indiscriminate, raising further protection concerns (UNICEF, 22/08/2017).

This shift in tactics continues to restrict humanitarian access across the northeast, especially in Borno state, limiting aid workers from reaching those in need and also preventing those populations from accessing vital services such as health facilities. Humanitarian access outside of Local Government Area HQs is still very limited by the security situation and therefore people living in more rural communities are often unreachable. (SBM Intelligence, 22/10/2017; ACLED 2017)

The low but steady number of **returnees** from Cameroon, Niger, and Chad is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the northeast with the capacities of both host communities and humanitarian response becoming strained. The returnee influx has been associated with pull factors regarding the perceived improvement in the security situation. (IOM, August 2017)

The number of **IDPs** across the northeast has seen a slight decline this year as individuals return to their place of origin. However over 1.7 million people remain displaced and the majority of IDPs are located within Borno state in areas with limited humanitarian access. Those displaced have identified food as a priority need. Displacement remains a significant driver of humanitarian needs in Nigeria. (IOM, August 2017) (RMMS, August 2017)

The conflict in the northeast has significantly damaged or **destroyed key infrastructure**, particularly education and health facilities. Despite ongoing repairs to these facilities there is still a significant gap between capacity and need. Attacks on health facilities continue to compound the issue. Disease outbreaks this year, notably hepatitis E and cholera, have been exacerbated by a lack of health facilities (Health Sector, August 2017). In addition, the conflict has had a significant impact on food security in the northeast, limiting production and also food availability in local markets (FEWS Net, September 2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Indiscriminate targeting of civilians is likely to continue in a similar pattern, further restricting access across the northeast. Suicide and IED attacks will not only limit access to the population as well as people's access to vital services, it will also continue to create protection needs.

IDPs and returnees will remain significantly in need throughout 2018. Despite the slowly decreasing numbers of IDPs, which can be expected to continue in a similar trend in 2018, this puts additional pressure on already strained communities across the northeast.

The damage to infrastructure is slowly being repaired but in most cases, is likely to remain a driver for next year, compounding the needs of those affected, especially with regard to health needs.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

With the access situation looking unlikely to improve due to the asymmetric conflict dynamics, food security across the northeast, and especially in Borno state, is likely to remain similar to what has been reported this year, with those facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes unlikely to see any improvement, while for those in areas with no humanitarian access the risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5) remains.

Access

The conflict dynamics will continue to drive the access situation across the northeast, which will continue to exacerbate needs across all sectors, especially health, education, and food. In Borno state access outside of LGA HQs is likely to remain limited, and humanitarian convoys are likely to continue to require military protection and therefore experience delays and restrictions.

Health

Health facilities across the northeast have been significantly impacted by the ongoing conflict, especially in Borno state. A high proportion of health facilities remain closed due to damage and those operating have serious shortages of trained staff and equipment. Repairs are ongoing but moving slowly. Indiscriminate attacks also limit people's movements and hinder access to those health facilities still operating. This is likely to continue into 2018 and drive health needs. (Health Sector, August 2017)

PALESTINE: GAZA

The **humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorated in 2017, marked by a severe electricity crisis** that affected WASH facilities and further restricted access to health services. Following the exhaustion of fuel reserves in April 2017, punitive measures imposed by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to compel Hamas to cede control over Gaza exacerbated the situation. The long-standing blockade of Gaza has perpetuated the humanitarian crisis. Toward the end of 2017, ongoing reconciliation efforts between the PA and Hamas bear the risk of further deteriorating the already tense political relationship between Israel and Palestine. The unstable political process, dependency on foreign fuel, and poor state of both economy and infrastructure mean that Gaza's humanitarian crisis will continue into 2018, particularly regarding WASH, health and NFI needs.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Damage to infrastructure
Long-accumulated damage to critical power, health, and WASH infrastructure

Economic crisis
Economic indicators deteriorated in 2017 with rising poverty and unemployment rates, especially among youth

Dependency on fuel deliveries
Depletion of fuel reserves from Qatar and Turkey and the PA's refusal to subsidise Israeli fuel

Punitive measures
implemented by the PA included power supply reductions, civil servant salary cuts, and withholding of medical deliveries and funding

Long-term blockade of Gaza
Israeli/Egyptian blockade prevents access to services and restricts the importation of equipment necessary for reconstruction

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

The long-standing blockade imposed on Gaza and the ongoing electricity crisis are likely to continue to affect both access and provision of basic services in 2018.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Shelter & NFIs

Health

WASH

CURRENT SITUATION

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is rooted in the long-term effects of occupation and previous conflicts. It has been perpetuated by the decade-long blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt as well as sanctions imposed by the PA since April 2017. The economic situation in Gaza deteriorated in 2017 due to private consumption slowing down as well as a sharp deceleration in reconstruction activities caused by insufficient funding. The poverty rate reached 80% in September and unemployment rates have been rising, with youth unemployment in particular exceeding 60% (World Bank 2017). **Infrastructural damage** and **the economic crisis** have increased Gaza's dependency on foreign aid and severely weakened its resilience to cope with further crises.

The chronic electricity deficit that has affected Gaza for over a decade worsened in 2017. Gaza has not been able to recover from the massive infrastructural damage incurred during the most recent conflict between Hamas and the Israeli army in 2014. Gaza's power plant suffered extensive damage in the conflict and reconstruction efforts were hampered by Israeli restrictions on the importation of essential equipment The plant has been highly vulnerable and **dependent on consistent fuel deliveries** because of its low storage capacity (OCHA 10/05/2017). Fuel reserves provided by Qatar and Turkey were used up in April 2017, which coincided with the PA refusing to continue to subsidise fuel from Israel as well as requesting Israel to reduce their electricity supply (Middle East Monitor 16/04/2017, Al Monitor 09/05/2017). Hamas did not have the funds to buy more fuel, which led to the shutdown of the power plant for two months and electricity blackouts of up to 22 hours a day (OCHA

04/05/2017). In May, the electricity supply had decreased by more than 30% compared to January (OCHA 05/2017). The power crisis has had a marked effect on the already strained WASH and health infrastructure. Sanitation and health facilities were forced to significantly limit their services due to lack of electricity and depend entirely on backup generators. The amount of clean water produced by water desalinisation plants decreased by 60% from March to April and remains at very low levels (OCHA 08/2017).

The power crisis has been compounded by a broad range of **punitive measures** imposed by the PA following Hamas' refusal to hold local elections in Gaza, a result of long-lasting judicial and legislative disputes between both parties. In addition to restricting access to fuel and electricity, other measures include withholding medical supply deliveries, healthcare funding, and making significant cuts to civil servants' salaries. The PA's request to reduce electricity to Gaza caused the power supply to remain at the same critically low level despite the power plant being operational again since June (Gisha 19/06/2017).

The deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in 2017 is rooted in the long-term land, air, and sea **blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt**, which has been compounding humanitarian needs since 2007. Following a few years of improved movement, restrictions at the Rafah crossing were tightened by Egypt in 2014. The volume of people crossing to Israel through Erez has been declining since January 2017 with numbers of crossings up to 60% lower than the monthly average

in 2016. Israel approved 93% of applications to cross through Erez for medical treatment in 2012, whereas the average approval rate in 2017 as of September stood at 53%. (OCHA 2017). The blockade significantly restricts the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, limiting access to medical treatment and perpetuating the ongoing economic crisis. Humanitarian access is limited with aid imports at their lowest levels since 2010 despite growing humanitarian needs across the Gaza Strip (OCHA 10/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

While it is possible that the PA will lift some of the punitive measures, the Israeli blockade on Gaza is likely to continue. Reconciliation efforts may slowly progress between Hamas and the PA, however such negotiations may lead to increased tensions between Israel and the PA/Hamas. Israel is likely to complicate the already strained relationship between the negotiating parties by refusing to acknowledge the reconciliation process in the event it does not meet their own conditions.

The economic situation is likely to remain dire, and the consequences of the blockade limit possibilities for significant improvement. Unemployment is likely to continue affecting almost 50% of people in Gaza, particularly youth and women. In 2018, Gaza is likely to continue to be dependent on fuel deliveries from Egypt and Israel and therefore subject to regional politics.

The power deficit, amounting to at least 50%, will continue to affect WASH and health facilities. The unstable political process, and poor state of both economy and infrastructure make it difficult for people to meet their basic needs and Gaza's humanitarian crisis will continue into 2018.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Shelter & NFIs

Electricity supply has been at critically low levels since April 2017, providing between 4-5 hours of electricity per day (OCHA 11/2017). Even if the PA were to withdraw the punitive measures, the power deficit would still amount to at least 50%, because the power plant and Egyptian power lines have sustained structural damage (WAFA). Throughout 2018, the shortages will likely continue to significantly affect the availability of essential services, disrupting health and WASH facilities, agriculture, and education.

Health

Health infrastructure suffers from accumulated damage and essential drug shortages increased in 2017 from 33% in March to 45% in October (OCHA 21/11/2017). The average approval rate for patients' applications to cross the border at Erez to seek medical attention has steadily decreased since 2012 and this trend is likely to continue. Power shortages will likely continue to affect hospitals, causing delays to surgery and treatment. Severe WASH needs will likely contribute to the spread of illness.

WASH

No more than 4% of fresh water is drinkable in Gaza and as of November 2017, the amount of clean water produced per month remains almost 50% lower than in March. Structural damage and lack of electricity obstructed the functioning of WASH facilities, causing pollution levels of wastewater flowing into the sea in 2017 to exceed international standards by up to 500%. This is likely to cause long-term detrimental effects. The WASH crisis is likely to continue in 2018 (OCHA 21/11/2017).

SOMALIA

The humanitarian situation in Somalia significantly deteriorated in 2017, as several seasons of poor and below-average rainfall impacted on food security and livelihoods. Some 949,000 people have been displaced internally by the drought since November 2016, with an additional 171,000 displaced by conflict in 2017, bringing the total number of newly displaced IDPs to over 2 million. Approximately half of the total population is in need of food assistance. IDP populations are highly vulnerable. Access to populations in need is severely restricted in southern and central regions due to conflict and insecurity. With drought conditions, insecurity, and access restrictions anticipated to continue, priority concerns for 2018 include food security, WASH, and nutrition.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Drought
Consecutive poor and below-average rains since 2016 caused livestock losses, crop failures, deterioration of livelihoods, and food price increases

Insecurity and conflict
Characterised by increased Al Shabaab activity in south and central Somalia, an IS-affiliated splinter group in Puntland, and clan violence

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Drought conditions are likely to continue into early 2018. Insecurity and access restrictions continue as armed conflict intensifies.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

WASH

Nutrition

CURRENT SITUATION

Drought: Somalia has been impacted by poor and below-average rainfall during the 2016 *gu*, 2016 *deyr*, and 2017 *gu* rainy seasons, as well as a particularly hot and dry 2017 *jilaal* season. The 2017 *gu* (April-June) rains were generally below-average to poor across regions in Somaliland, Puntland, central Somalia, and some regions in the south, including Bakool and large parts of Hiiraan and Lower and Middle Shabelle. The rains ended early in most parts of the country, extending the dry period (FSNAU 28/09/2017). The onset of the 2017 *deyr* rains was delayed in southern and central Somalia. Throughout October, when seasonal rains are usually heaviest, rainfall was 50% below average (FEWS 11/2017). In the beginning of November, southern and central regions received above-average rainfall, which has helped the recovery of pasture and water resources in these areas. Flooding was reported in some locations in southern and central Somalia (FAO 13/11/2017). Northern regions received little to no rainfall in early November (FEWS 12/11/2017).

The drought conditions have led to a reduction of crop yield. In southern Somalia, the 2017 *gu* cereal production is estimated to be 87% below the 2010-2016 average in the northwest and 13% below the five-year average in the south (FSNAU 28/09/2017). Consecutive poor harvests led to an increase in cereal prices, which are higher than in 2016 and the five-year average across most regions (FSNAU 28/09/2017). Significant losses in livestock herds due to the drought have been reported; for instance, 60% of goat and sheep stock were lost in northern and central Somalia, and 20-50% were lost in the south, which has negatively impacted livelihoods of

agro-pastoral and pastoral families (FSNAU 17/07/2017). Food security has deteriorated due to the drought.

Drought has driven displacement, with some 949,000 drought-related IDPs recorded since November 2016. IDP settlements in Bay and Banadir regions have received the most arrivals (UNHCR 11/2017).

Before the beginning of the current drought, Somalia already had 1.1 million IDPs (OCHA 31/08/2017), mostly living in informal settlements (IDMC 2017; REACH 04/2017). Since 2014, 70,000 Somalis have also returned from Kenya and 33,000 have returned from Yemen (UNHCR 30/09/2017). Returnees predominantly settle in the urban centres of Mogadishu and Kismayo (DDG 08/2017).

Insecurity and conflict: In 2017, Al Shabaab has expanded its presence around the major cities of Mogadishu and Kismayo, and is responsible for the highest number of conflict-related civilian fatalities, despite ongoing operations against Al Shabaab by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali forces and US airstrikes (ACLED 09/2017; Critical Threats 17/10/2017). The most deadly bomb attack attributed to Al Shabaab occurred on 14 October 2017, killing over 350 people and injuring over 200 (BBC 20/10/2017). The number of incidents of clan violence against civilians in 2017 is comparable to 2016, however the lethality of violent incidents has increased (ACLED 09/2017). An IS-aligned breakaway faction of Al Shabaab is present in Puntland. They temporarily took over Qandala, Bari region in late 2016, and since have slowly increased activity, staging more attacks in Bari (Reuters 08/11/2017; ACLED 11/2017). On 3 November, the US conducted its first airstrike against

the group (Reuters 03/11/2017). Al Shabaab is affiliated with Al Qaeda and is in conflict with the IS-affiliated faction (CTC 01/2017).

In southern and central Somalia, the security situation is volatile and territorial control changes frequently (DRC 03/2017). Violence and insecurity has driven displacement, as well as severely restricted access of humanitarian actors to populations in need. In comparison to early 2016, access has worsened, with large parts of Lower and Middle Juba, Lower and Middle Shabelle, Bay, Gedo, and Bakool being inaccessible (INSO 15/06/2017). Many roads in southern and central Somalia are inaccessible and some populations in need, such as in Baidoa, can only be reached by plane (Logistics Cluster 14/06/2017; Logistics Cluster 31/10/2017). Furthermore, Al Shabaab ambushes aid deliveries and attacks aid workers (Critical Threats 05/09/2017). From January to October 2017, humanitarian organisations were impacted by more than 130 violent incidents (OCHA 31/10/2017). An estimated 25% of people affected by food insecurity are located in inaccessible areas (WFP 23/08/2017).

Conflict has internally displaced approximately 171,000 people so far in 2017, with most conflict-related IDPs originating from Lower Shabelle. Conflict-related displacement spiked in July and August due to clan violence and military operations, and significantly decreased in September and October. However, intensified fighting between Somali forces and Al Shabaab, as well as airstrikes against Al Shabaab, led to an increase in conflict-related displacements in November in Lower and Middle Shabelle and Banadir (UNHCR 23/11/2017; OCHA 31/08/2017; UNHCR 11/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Increased likelihood of below-average October-December rains (*deyr*) and resulting reduced crop production is likely to worsen food insecurity in 2018.

Security is likely to deteriorate as Al Shabaab expands its presence and lethality of attacks increases. Inter-clan violence may intensify against the backdrop of state-level tensions. Operations by Somali security forces and AMISOM against Al Shabaab will likely increase in response to the October bombing.

While IS in Somalia cannot compare with Al Shabaab in terms of strength and personnel, violence in the areas of Puntland where the group is present will likely increase. The group will likely continue to be targeted by Puntland's security forces and the US, as well as by Al Shabaab since the two groups are opposed. This will likely impact the civilian population particularly in Bari region.

Al Shabaab is likely to continue to impede humanitarian access in southern and central Somalia. Humanitarian access is unlikely to improve as widespread conflict and insecurity continues.

Returns are likely to increase due to the worsening of the crisis in Yemen and increased returns from Dadaab camps in Kenya.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

In October 2017, 2.4 million people are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 866,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), up from an estimated 1.13 million across both phases in October 2016. 6.2 million need food assistance. Famine (IPC Phase 5) remains possible in 2018. Some areas in Crisis face Emergency in 2018, including the Northern Inland Pastoral and Bay-Bakool Low Potential Agropastoral livelihood zones and central Somalia. IDP settlements are a priority concern: Baidoa, Mogadishu, Dhusamareb, and Dolow are in Emergency (FEWS 11/2017; FEWS 10/2016; FSNAU 28/09/2017).

WASH

The drought compounds the WASH crisis, which will likely continue in 2018. 4.4 million people need WASH services. Drought led to water sources being overused and drying up, generating drinking water needs. IDP settlements have insufficient WASH services, and open defecation is common in some. Poor sanitation increases the risk of disease outbreaks. An acute watery diarrhoea/cholera outbreak in 2017 recorded over 77,000 cases across Somalia, compared to 15,619 cases in 2016 (WASH Cluster 30/09/2017; OCHA 14/09/2017; OCHA 16/05/2017; WHO 22/01/2017; HNO 11/2017).

Nutrition

Malnutrition worsened in 2017, with an estimated 388,000 children under five acutely malnourished, an increase by 17% against the 2016 *gu* surveys. An estimated 87,000 of these children suffered from severe malnutrition, constituting a 35% increase. IDP settlements in Dhusamareb, Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu are particularly affected by malnutrition with SAM and GAM levels above the emergency thresholds. The nutrition crisis will likely continue in 2018 (FSNAU 28/09/2017).

SOUTH SUDAN

Conflict has persisted in South Sudan since 2013 and led to the first declaration of famine in the country in 2017. The failure of the transitional government to become operational has resulted in continued insecurity and large-scale displacement, particularly to neighbouring countries in 2017. Food insecurity is significant, with 45% of the population in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and above as of October, including 25,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 5). Continued violence has led to the disruption of planting activities, reducing harvest expectations for 2017. The economic crisis has eroded people's resilience to cope with high food and fuel costs. In 2018, high food security and protection needs, as well as more displacement are likely.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Continued competition for territory
is driving insecurity and disrupting humanitarian access

Fragmentation of armed groups
The splintering of groups is making progression of the peace agreement more difficult and increasing insecurity

Economic crisis
The inability to meet basic needs is escalating discontent with the government, and driving food insecurity, criminality and banditry

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Ongoing insecurity and competition for territorial control are likely contribute to further displacement and extreme levels of food insecurity.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

Protection

Displacement

OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

In February 2017, famine was officially declared in South Sudan as widespread conflict and a collapsing economy led to the classification of 1 million people as at risk of facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Famine (IPC Phase 5) levels of food insecurity (UN 20/02/17). Ongoing **competition over territorial control** resulted in the government making territorial gains through continued widespread military offensives. In August government forces took control of Pagak town, an SPLA-IO stronghold of strategic significance. Growing public dissatisfaction with the government has garnered increased political support for opposition groups, including the SPLA-IO.

The SPLA-IO are increasingly engaging in war tactics such as road ambushes, looting, and kidnapping. This could be attributable to a weakened position resulting from the continued exile of their leader, former Vice President Riek Machar, and their lack of logistical capacity (UNSC 20/09/2017). Without clear leadership or logistical strength, they are conducting more impromptu attacks and robberies. Despite the shift to these tactics, SPLA-IO forces were capable of taking areas from government control, such as the reported capture of Ombachi payam in Yei River state in early November (Radiotamazuj 2/11/17). This demonstrates the capacity of both sides to continue fighting, which is disrupting trade and driving increases in transport and food costs.

Additionally, the insecurity has reduced humanitarian space. Humanitarian access incidents have increased: 946 incidents were recorded between January and October 2017 compared with 731 incidents during the comparable period of 2016 (SSPC 05/17; OCHA 12/10/17; OCHA 5/12/16).

The government, the SPLA-IO, and other armed groups have **increasingly factionalised and localised.** The 2015 peace agreement does not reflect the current fragmented nature of the crisis (ICG 26/5/17). This proliferation of armed groups compounds the existing lack of political will to push forward a solution within the framework of the 2015 peace agreement. In addition to the peace agreement there is the national dialogue, which the SPLA-IO continue to reject, and the Uganda initiative. This allows for 'forum shopping' among groups and decreases the viability of a unified political solution. The fragmentation is also reflected in the increasing number of communal conflicts being fought along ethnic lines.

The **economic crisis** is further contributing to the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. The year-on-year cost of staple foods such as maize and sorghum were twice as high in August compared to 2016 (Giews 10/17). Transport is affected as fuel costs in June rose by 70% to 266% higher than the same time in 2016, impacting on food deliveries (WFP 08/17). The collapsed economy has pushed many combatants and civilians into criminality. Resilience to the protracted economic crisis is decreasing and is evident, for example, in a change in looting patterns from organised and large-scale operations in 2016, to thefts that are more disorganised and of smaller value in 2017 (UN 18/08/17).

A key consequence of the insecurity in 2017 is the projection of below-average harvests in traditional breadbasket regions such as the southern areas of the Greater Equatorias. Cereal output for 2016 was 825,000 metric tons, compared to the five-year average of 880,000 metric tons. The 2017 forecast is further reduced at a projected 806,000 metric tons (FAO 14/09/17). The infestation of fall armyworms as well as flooding in former Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria, and Central Equatoria have also contributed to reduced harvests (Fewsnet 08/17).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Insecurity is likely to continue as both sides compete for territory, leading to more displacement and further deterioration of food security. Exhaustion of coping mechanisms, reduced harvests, and continued insecurity is likely and will continue to limit food access and availability.

Fragmentation and proliferation of armed groups will likely interfere with the peace process. While new splinter groups not aligned with either side may not engage at a macro level, they will still increase micro level conflicts and drive insecurity. The economic situation will likely increase criminality and insecurity and lead to rising discontent with the government.

Conscious of the approaching end of the transitional government agreement in April 2018, the government have announced their intention to carry out elections. If this goes ahead it will likely lead to heightened insecurity as current conditions are not conducive to fair, free, and inclusive elections.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

The number of food insecure has decreased from 6 million to 4.8 million as of October as a result of harvest season, but the number in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) has doubled in comparison to 2016. Particularly affected are Greater Bahr el Ghazal and the Greater Equatorias, which are breadbasket regions, as well as Jonglei. These areas will be of concern for 2018. The lean season is expected to start early, with a January onset and continuing until July (Fewsnet 09/17; USAID 10/17).

Protection

Indiscriminate attacks by the government and armed groups are likely to lead to continued civilian casualties. As of 2 November there are some 212,800 people seeking protection in United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Protection of Civilian sites. In addition to insecurity, the economic crisis is likely to encourage negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage and prostitution (Protection Cluster 03/17).

Displacement

Large-scale displacement is likely to continue as the exodus of South Sudanese to neighbouring countries continues. As of the end of September, some 638,000 people have fled South Sudan in 2017, compared with 737,000 in all of 2016 (UNHCR 10/16; UNHCR 09/17). Similar levels of displacement are likely in 2018.

SUDAN

Conflict in Sudan in 2017 has been characterised by regular incidents of violence rather than any major new offensives, yet humanitarian organisations have had limited access to most of the conflict affected areas in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. More than 2.3 million people remain internally displaced and 3.8 million people countrywide are food insecure. Conflict and food insecurity in neighbouring South Sudan led to more than 85,000 refugee arrivals over January-March, increasing pressure on resources for displaced and host communities. Sudan's health system faces chronic weaknesses and the 2016 outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea continued to spread in 2017. IDPs are particularly vulnerable due to insufficient food, lack of clean water, and poor hygiene services. In 2018, protection, food security and health needs are likely priority concerns.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Government's increased leverage
Sudan's international cooperation reduces pressure to implement domestic reform

Refugee influx
Arrival numbers of South Sudanese refugees increased significantly in early 2017 following the escalation of conflict in South Sudan

Public health crisis
An insufficient public health system and limited WASH infrastructure have contributed to a major outbreak and spread of acute watery diarrhoea

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

The security situation is unlikely to improve, high numbers of refugee arrivals will continue, and poor WASH and health infrastructure are likely to limit the response to disease outbreak.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Protection

Food security & livelihoods

Health

CURRENT SITUATION

Sudan saw a decrease in armed conflict in the first part of 2017 following ceasefires declared by the government, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in October 2016 (Reuters 15/01/2017). Both government forces and non-state armed groups maintained a low level of military activity until May, when active conflict resumed between Sudanese forces and SLA-MM in North and East Darfur.

From May-July, the conflict dynamics changed in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. This followed the SPLM-N deputy chairman's resignation, and increasing internal disagreement over inclusion of the right of self-determination (Nuba Mountains region) in negotiations with the Sudanese government (AllAfrica 03/04/2017). The situation ended in SPLM-N splitting into two factions falling along ethnic lines and led to clashes between supporters of both sides (Nuba reports 31/07/2017).

Peace negotiations on the conflict in the Two Areas (Blue Nile and South Kordofan) have stagnated with no progress made in 2017. The SPLM-N split has negatively affected the negotiations, as the Sudanese government can no longer hold discussions with a unified SPLM-N body and some members of the government's negotiation team have rejected to negotiate with a faction of SPLM-N (Sudan Tribune 28/09/2017). Both factions of SPLM-N have expressed a level of readiness to discuss humanitarian matters, but discussions on the political agenda have not progressed.

In 2017, the government has shown interest in a level of international cooperation, particularly with the US to lift the economic sanctions – some in place for 20 years – which finally happened in October. The main reasons behind the decision were the Sudanese government's agreement to not pursue arm deals with North Korea, but also improved humanitarian access in Darfur and cooperation with the US to address the in-country conflict and fight activities by non-state armed groups (Al Jazeera 07/10/2017; Economist 10/10/2017). Relations between Sudan and the EU have recently been shaped by the EU's increased support to the Sudanese government in containing the flow of migrants to North Africa and further to Europe (Guardian 27/02/2017).

These international concessions arguably provide the government with **more leverage** to deal with domestic policies in their own way. As the government of Sudan has adhered to the requests from the US and EU, there seems to be international reluctance to pressure the government to reform domestic policy. Government troops have reportedly burned down numerous villages and attacked civilians during demonstrations. In June, government-affiliated Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fought against non-state armed groups in North Darfur, leaving more than 35,000 people displaced and dozens of civilians killed (Dabanga 25/06/2017). In September, government forces opened fire towards protesters in Kalma camp who were demonstrating against President al-Bashir's visit to the camp (HRW 22/09/2017).

The conflict in neighbouring South Sudan has been driving further displacement in the region. As of October 2017, over 185,000 South Sudanese have arrived mainly to White Nile, Darfur, and South Kordofan, far surpassing the total number of 131,000 South Sudanese arrivals in 2016 (UNHCR 31/10/2017; UNHCR 01/01/2017). The **refugee influx** affects areas already hosting nearly 3 million Sudanese IDPs. The influx has affected resource availability of both displaced people and resident households (Fewsnet 08/07/2017).

Throughout 2017, Sudan has been facing **public health crisis.** Acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) continues to spread in Sudan after it was first reported in Blue Nile state in August 2016. In April 2017 cases were reported in White Nile, which hosts over 160,000 South Sudanese refugees. The outbreak spread rapidly between June and August, but there has been a decreasing trend in the number of new cases towards the end of the year (OCHA 22/10/2017; UNICEF 31/10/2017). As of October 2017, more than 35,000 suspected AWD cases had been reported including an estimated 800 associated deaths (Sudan Tribune 15/10/2017). The Sudanese government has been reluctant to refer to the outbreak as cholera as it would expose the country's weak health system. The government has sought to prevent hospitals, doctors, and journalists from reporting on the outbreak and is calling it acute watery diarrhoea (Washington Post 14/09/2017), meaning that suspected cholera cases have likely been underreported. Access constraints related to the unstable security situation have also continued to hinder humanitarian response in parts of Darfur as well as in SPLM-N held areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The peace process is unlikely to progress in 2018. Parties to the conflict demonstrate a continued lack of willingness to cooperate to achieve political progress, while increased factionalism in SPLM-N and lack of government accountability are increasing the risk of an escalation in violence.

The resulting lack of improvement in South Sudan's security situation as well as continuing food insecurity there are likely to drive displacement into Sudan in 2018. The displacement is likely to limit access to livelihoods, having a negative impact on purchasing power and the ability to access basic necessities including food.

Food insecurity and malnutrition are likely to remain key challenges particularly in North Darfur and Red Sea states as well as in parts of South Darfur, South Kordofan and White Nile. Restrictions on access to land, limited agricultural labour opportunities, and low asset holdings continue to affect food access and availability. An increasing displaced population is also likely to trigger inter-communal tensions.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Protection

3.2 million people are in need of protection. States hosting the majority of South Sudanese refugees, particularly Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, are impacted by conflict and displacement (UNHCR 15/10/2017). 88% of South Sudanese refugees are women and children in particular need of protection (OCHA 23/04/2017). Sexual and gender-based violence is a major concern, including widespread use of rape as a weapon of war. Children are vulnerable to family separation because of recruitment into armed groups, trafficking, early marriage, and abuses.

Food security & livelihoods

Around 3.8 million people are food insecure in Sudan and the situation is likely to continue. Between July and September 2017, over 3.2 million people were expected in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and over 160,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) particularly in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan (Fewsnet 01/11/2017). Increased numbers of South Sudanese refugees are likely to impact the availability of resources for both displaced people and host communities, particularly in White Nile as well as in East and West Darfur.

Health

Disease outbreaks are likely to place strain on limited health services in 2018. AWD and waterborne diseases are of particular concern. Health and hygiene promotion is needed to prevent the spread of diseases in many parts of the country, but a weak public health system, shortage of medicines and qualified personnel, as well as continuing access constraints are likely to limit the possibilities for sufficient preventive measures. 4.3 million people remain in need of healthcare (OCHA 28/04/2017).

SYRIA

Conflict continued as the main driver of humanitarian needs in Syria in 2017. Parties to the conflict launched new offensives in the form of sieges and military advances. The focus of fighting has been on northeastern Syria for most of the year, although in October a shift towards northwestern areas of the country became apparent. 915,000 primary and secondary displacements have been reported since October 2016, compared to 804,000 in the previous year. International actors have continued their involvement in the Syrian conflict, contributing to humanitarian needs by exacerbating the impact of military operations undertaken by local actors and causing casualties of their own. Despite the mitigating potential of the Astana agreements between Russia, Iran, and Turkey including the implementation of de-escalation zones throughout Syria, protection and health needs as well as displacement are likely to remain high in 2018.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Continued offensives
In 2017, new offensives were characterised by sieges and military advances

Intervention by international powers
US and Russian airstrikes continue to support advances by the SDF and the pro-government coalition, respectively

Intervention by regional powers
Iranian and Turkish interventions continued to be a significant factor driving the conflict in 2017

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Despite the potential for real or perceived progress of de-escalation zones, conflict is likely to escalate in Idlib and Eastern Ghouta, and continue in Deir-ez-Zor.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Protection

Displacement

Health

OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

The Syrian conflict in 2017 has seen new offensives, but also de-escalation in areas where parties to the conflict have been able to gain and hold territory. As a result, humanitarian access improved in some areas, with the number of people in need in besieged and hard-to-reach areas decreasing by around 34% between April and September. Nevertheless, access remains limited across the country, especially in Idlib and besieged locations in Rural Damascus (OCHA 27/09/2017; 27/04/2017).

In 2017, offensives were characterised by **sieges and military advances**, partially driven by parties to the conflict trying to reclaim as much territory as possible before a peace deal. Siege as a war tactic has been used with increasing effect by pro-government forces from early on in the conflict. Since the fall of eastern Aleppo in December 2016 its use has been accelerated, leading to territorial gains accompanied by partial or total transfers of the population to other areas of the country, most notably to the opposition-controlled area of Idlib. So-called evacuation agreements within this framework were a very prominent feature of the conflict in 2017. The two largest population transfers occurred in December 2016 and in May 2017: from eastern Aleppo (34,000 people evacuated) and from al Waer neighbourhood, Homs (20,000 people evacuated) to Idlib (Siege Watch 18/09/2017; Al Jazeera 16/05/2017).

Military advances were concentrated against the Islamic State (IS), which lost significant territory in Syria in 2017, including its de-facto capital ar Raqqa and the majority of oil-rich Deir-ez-Zor governorate. Another major offensive occurred in Idlib, where opposition group Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) gained control of large swaths of the governorate (ECFR 12/09/2017; Al Jazeera 01/10/2017).

International military action remains decisive in the development of the conflict, driven by geopolitical interests and the desire to defeat extremist groups. The US has helped opposition group Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) advance against IS in ar Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates. Civilian casualties from US-led coalition airstrikes have increased sharply in 2017, overtaking those from Russian airstrikes (Airwars retrieved 11/10/2017). **Russia** is supporting government advances through airstrikes and the deployment of military advisers, as is **Iran** (Al Jazeera 08/04/2017).

Turkey entered northern Aleppo governorate to stop IS and SDF advances along its border in August 2016. The operation ended in March 2017, but tensions with the SDF have been mounting in the third quarter of 2017. As of October 2017, Turkey is also pushing to establish a de-escalation zone in Idlib to stop the expansion of the mainly Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the primary component of SDF, in northern Syria (Middle East Eye 08/10/2017; 10/10/2017).

The Astana agreements over de-escalation zones have been a major political development in 2017, contributing to the perception of an improving security situation in Syria. These agreements foresee ceasefires, access for humanitarian aid, and the restoration of public services in four opposition held areas across the country. Despite the fact that the de-escalation zones are yet to be fully implemented, they already appear to be benefiting the government of Syria more than other parties to the conflict. By establishing a ceasefire between pro-government forces and some opposition groups but not others, the government and its allies have more resources to launch offensives against groups that are not included in the agreement, both within the zones and outside (News Deeply 17/05/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Drivers for 2017 are likely to remain relevant in 2018. Next year is likely to be decisive for the Syria conflict, as any real or perceived progress in establishing de-escalation zones would change perceptions of the conflict. This would likely affect third country policies on refugees, and potentially prompt more spontaneous returns.

Conflict zones are likely to remain in Deir-ez-Zor and the remaining pockets of IS controlled territory. At the same time, hostilities are escalating in northwestern Syria, in Idlib, where an escalation between Turkey-backed FSA forces and HTS are likely, as is a pro-government operation if Turkey fails to enforce a de-escalation zone in the area. Conflict may also escalate between the SDF and Turkey in northern Aleppo. Moreover, the Syrian government is likely to tighten its siege on Eastern Ghouta, the last major besieged area in Syria, where around 400,000 people are trapped. This is likely to result in new population transfers, continuing a trend that has seen the relocation of perceived opposition supporters to Idlib governorate.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Protection

Despite moves to implement de-escalation zones, conflict is likely to expose civilians to protection threats in 2018, given 97% of communities in Syria report at least one protection concern (HNO 2018). Executions, detentions, gender-based violence, and restrictions on freedom of movement are likely to continue. Extensive UXO and IED contamination will exacerbate risks especially in former IS-controlled areas. As was the case in 2017, post-surrender communities are of concern, with human rights abuses perpetrated by authorities likely, despite improved humanitarian access.

Displacement

In 2018, IDP needs are likely to be a priority concern, with new displacement triggered by renewed conflict escalations, and extreme vulnerability of people returning to de-escalated areas. Extensive damage to critical infrastructure, especially in ar Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, will exacerbate acute humanitarian needs, particularly concerning shelter, access to basic services, and livelihoods. Idlib is of particular concern, with a large vulnerable IDP and evacuee population, especially along the border with Turkey, where tensions between parties to the conflict are building up (IRIN 09/10/2017).

Health

Health needs have been increasing since 2016 and will likely continue as a main concern in 2018. The continuation of attacks on health facilities and workers as a war tactic by all parties is likely, limiting healthcare access and availability. Vaccination campaigns in newly accessible areas will likely be needed to prevent disease outbreaks such as polio. Besieged areas, where sufficient medical care has been unavailable for prolonged periods of time, are likely to be priority areas for response.

VENEZUELA

The economic and political situation in Venezuela deteriorated in 2017, and is likely to continue to do so in 2018. In 2017, the economic crisis continued to hamper the provision and access to basic services, severely affecting food security and healthcare. Further, in a move to strengthen President Maduro's grip on power, a Constituent Assembly was elected in July and has taken over the opposition-controlled Parliament, effectively dissolving any type of opposition against the ruling regime within state institutions. This election sparked countrywide protests from April to September, which turned violent. The economic crisis, with a high risk of full economic default on foreign debt, political deadlock, and insecurity are likely to continue to drive displacement, and increase food and health needs in 2018.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

Economic crisis
Skyrocketing inflation and the state's lack of financial resources restricts provision and access to basic services

Erosion of democratic institutions
The newly elected pro-government Constituent Assembly took over the functions of the opposition-led Parliament

Insecurity
Ongoing insecurity and protests restricted movement, and provision and access to basic services

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Further deterioration of the economic crisis, political deadlock, and insecurity likely.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

Health

Displacement

CURRENT SITUATION

Venezuela's **economic decline**, driven by the 2014 fall in oil prices, continued in 2017 and is severely affecting prices of basic goods and delivery of basic services. Oil production, which is the country's main source of revenue, fell to a 28-year low in October 2017 (Oil Price 14/11/2017). With reduced oil production and increasing difficulties to export oil because of deteriorating infrastructure, the government's financial resources continued to diminish.

Venezuela's foreign currency reserves have steadily depleted in the past years, from USD 20 billion in 2015 to below USD 10 billion in November, their lowest in over 20 years (CNN 17/07/2017). Venezuela is heavily dependent on imports, which have consistently decreased due to hard currency shortages. Lack of foreign currency reserves also limits the government's ability to pay its debt. On 15 November, credit rating agencies declared Venezuela and PDVSA, the state's oil company, in selective default, after failure to fully pay a USD 3.5 billion debt repayment at the beginning of November (Washington Post 19/11/2017). The risk of economic default on foreign debt had steadily increased throughout 2017 ahead of heavy debt repayments. While Venezuela's deal with Russia to restructure its debt may temporarily alleviate the situation, heavier debt payments are expected at the beginning of 2018 (FT 15/11/2017). Full default would result in a total collapse of the economy.

Inflation steadily increased in 2017, and is expected to reach 720% by the end of the year, with some predicting inflation rates as high as 922% (Washington Post 03/10/2017; Focus Economics 03/09/2017). Skyrocketing prices signif-icantly reduce access to basic goods and services. Since nearly a third of the population does not have a bank account, paying for basic goods is made even more difficult by acute cash shortages (News 07/10/2017).

The slow erosion of democratic institutions that has been taking place in the past few years peaked in July 2017 with the election of a Constituent Assembly. The establishment of an institution able to revise the constitution, and to take over powers from the opposition-controlled Parliament, the National Assembly, had been a long-standing goal of the government. The election occurred at the end of July, and the opposition neither recognised nor took part in the process. The newly elected Constituent Assembly, composed of pro-government members, has since taken over the functions of the National Assembly, and is committed to trying opposition members who took part in the protests for treason (ICG 22/08/2017; BBC 30/08/2017). This effectively cancels any form of political opposition against the regime within state institutions.

President Maduro's attempt to strengthen his grip on power is further fragmenting the state. Heavily reliant on the military for his survival, several soldiers were arrested during the protests for lacking allegiance to the state. Additionally, there were rumours that lower-ranked officials with little access to revenues from the army's involvement in organised criminal activities were defecting (Insight Crime 12/06/2017). While there have been no reports of military defections since the election of state governors in October, a potential army split in 2018 cannot be excluded, given economic decline only reinforces the different levels of access to revenue along the military hierarchy.

The institutional crisis is further aggravated by the opposition's division between those who advocate a solution within the framework of the existing government and agreed to participate in the October state governor elections, and those who are in complete opposition to the ruling regime. Some factions within the Mesa de la Unidad Democratica (MUD), the platform that brings together opposition groups, accused the MUD leadership of 'treachery' for participating in the October elections (ICG 10/2017). This divided opposition weakens the potential of a cohesive party to engage in negotiations, as well as a credible alternative to the current ruling regime.

On 1 April, ahead of the contested election for the Constituent Assembly, country-wide protests erupted and continued until September. Protests turned violent, with over 120 people killed between April and August, hundreds injured, and thousands arrested (Reuters 02/08/2017). **High levels of violence** were exacerbated by new policies to strengthen local self-defense groups known as 'colectivos' at the beginning of 2017, which generally have impunity (Insight Crime 26/04/2017). During the protests, opposition leaders used increasingly uncompromising rhetoric as they called on protesters to continue to resist against the regime. Protests disrupted movement and provision of services throughout the country (ICG 05/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The economic crisis is likely to continue to escalate in 2018. The current difficulties to repay the debt may prompt tighter economic sanctions, and lead to a full default, which would result in the collapse of the economy. Potential negotiations over debt payment with international partners could avoid full default, but are unlikely to improve the economic situation. Economic challenges are likely to continue to limit the government's capacity to provide basic services, and restrict access to services.

President Maduro's authoritarian actions are likely to continue to spark resistance. Maduro is unlikely to back down now that he has consolidated his powers through the Constituent Assembly and the October state governors' election. Divisions within the opposition are likely to grow ahead of the December municipal elections, and the 2018 general elections, as some groups agree to participate and others reject the process. This is likely to further weaken their position as a negotiating partner, and as a credible alternative to the ruling regime.

Upcoming elections are likely to bolster more civil unrest. The opposition's divisions are likely to diminish their capacity to mobilise people in an organised manner. Protests are likely to be spontaneous and to turn violent.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

Food insecurity is likely to escalate in 2018. Food ration prices distributed by the government increased by 150% between April and August 2017 due to inflation, with around 6.7 million people relying on governmental food distribution programmes (Caritas 09/2017). The price of a food basket on the black market also increased 23.6% per month on average between April and August, and recorded the highest increase in 20 years between June and July (Caritas 09/2017; Caracas Chronicles 16/08/2017).

Displacement

Displacement to neighbouring countries is likely to continue in 2018. Venezuelans fleeing to neighbouring countries continued to increase in 2017. In the first nine months of 2017, an estimated 50,000 Venezuelans sought asylum worldwide, up from an estimated 27,000 in the whole of 2016 (UNHCR 14/07/2017; UNHCR 13/11/2017). Most notable movements in 2017 were reported toward Colombia, including Colombians living in Venezuela and returning to Colombia, as well as Brazil.

Health

Severe health needs are likely to be reported in 2018, as conditions of health facilities continue to deteriorate. Acute medicine shortages (85-90%) from reduced imports coupled with inefficient, understaffed, and inoperative health facilities due to lack of economic resources has led to severe health needs and drove increasing caseloads of diphtheria and malaria in 2017, diseases that had been eradicated in the 1990s but re-emerged in 2016 (Reuters 10/05/2017; Reuters 25/09/2017; Run Run 17/10/2017).

YEMEN

New military campaigns by the Hadi government, the al Houthi-Saleh alliance, and international actors, as well as the near collapse of public health and WASH infrastructure have caused a significant deterioration in the humanitarian situation in 2017, resulting in large-scale displacement, and one of the worst cholera outbreaks in recorded history. Severe food insecurity, the collapse of the central bank and the de facto blockade on imports have further deteriorated the humanitarian situation. Fighting continues while peace negotiations have stagnated with neither side showing a strong commitment to a diplomatic solution. Food security, health, and WASH needs are likely to increase through 2018.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

New offensives
Fighting around Taiz and al Hudaydah has been particularly intense. US forces have increased airstrikes against AQAP

WASH infrastructure damage
Bombing damage and a lack of fuel have caused a significant deterioration of water and sanitation systems

Saudi-led blockade
Al Hudaydah and Saleef port have been particularly affected, normally processing 80% of commercial and humanitarian imports

Public health crisis
Restricted imports of medical supplies, damaged infrastructure, and lack of skilled health practitioners have exacerbated the spread of cholera

Central banking crisis
Unpaid public sector salaries and increasing prices have limited the population's access to food and other services

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Humanitarian situation is likely to deteriorate in 2018 particularly in the south, west, and northern governorates: food security continues to deteriorate, and cholera likely to continue to spread.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

Food security & livelihoods

Health

WASH

CURRENT SITUATION

Hostilities have escalated in Yemen, with more airstrikes in the first half of 2017 than in all of 2016 (USAID 18/08/2017). Most airstrikes have been concentrated in frontline provinces and have destroyed large amounts of Yemeni infrastructure, including parts of the main al Hudaydah port as well as hospitals, schools, and roads (Al Jazeera 16/08/2017). Despite **an increase in fighting**, the frontlines of the conflict have remained much the same.

Civilians are bearing the brunt of the fighting: over 3.3 million people have been displaced since the escalation of the conflict in March 2015, and 17 million people are estimated to be food insecure (Shelter Cluster 27/07/2017; ECHO 26/10/2017). The Yemeni state is fracturing even further with stronger secessionist movement to form an independent south Yemen, which hinders the possibilities for a political solution (Al Jazeera 20/10/2017). Additionally, humanitarian actors are struggling to control one of the worst cholera outbreaks in history affecting more than 910,000 people (eDews 09/11/2017).

The Hadi government backed by the Saudi-led coalition launched a new offensive, Operation Golden Arrow, to retake the western coast in January 2017. The operation made initial gains around Dhubab and al Mokha, but later stagnated around Taiz and al Hudaydah. Ongoing fighting in these areas drove large-scale displacement and caused significant **damage to infrastructure including healthcare and WASH facilities**, shelters, and ports.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) utilised the volatile security situation and initiated new attacks, which has triggered a major upscaling of US airstrikes primarily in Abyan, al Baydah, and Shabwah since March as well as an offensive of the Emirati-backed al Hizam forces, further deteriorating the security situation, particularly in Abyan (Critical Threats 10/10/2017). Despite these offensives, AQAP has not been significantly weakened. Islamic State Wilayat al Baydah (IS) also continues to operate but has not made significant gains (Critical Threats 21/09/2017).

Saudi Arabia and its allies have been implementing a naval **blockade** on Yemen's coast, and restricted travel by air, land, and sea since 2015 to prevent arms from reaching Houthi fighters. In November the Saudi-led coalition tightened the blockade, temporarily halting all commercial and humanitarian access for two weeks after Houthis launched a missile from Yemen targeting Riyadh on Saudi Arabian territory (Reuters 11/10/2017). The blockade has been a key factor in increasing delivery times of humanitarian supplies and preventing essential supplies from entering the country including food, medicines, medical equipment, and fuel. Al Hudaydah and Saleef ports have been particularly affected by the blockade, which has caused significant access challenges as 80% of food and humanitarian aid is shipped through these ports (OCHA 13/11/2017). In the first eight months of 2017, al Hudaydah received only 21 commercial shipments, compared to 54 for the same period of 2016, which was also subjected to blockade conditions (Reuters 11/10/2017).

Lack of medicines, equipment, fuel for generators, and a lack of trained medical staff have been key drivers in the **deterioration of public healthcare** and WASH infrastructure, exacerbating the rapid spread of cholera. The population's coping capacity has been further weakened by food insecurity and poor nutrition. The Hadi government has been unable to pay most public salaries after August 2016 due to a cash liquidity crisis and the ongoing **collapse of the Yemeni economy** (Critical Threats 15/11/2017). The dependence of 30% of the Yemeni population on public salaries together with increasing food prices and restrictions on commercial and humanitarian imports are aggravating socioeconomic issues and deepening the severity of the food crisis (WFP 30/09/2017).

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The political stalemate is likely to persist, with all parties lacking commitment to peace negotiations, along with active fighting, especially for the control of al Hudaydah. Stronger secessionist movement in south Yemen makes a political solution even more unlikely.

The cholera outbreak is likely to continue due to lack of capacity of WASH and health systems. Insecurity and restrictions of movement hinder access to remaining healthcare services. Continuation of the import blockade is likely to deteriorate the situation even further.

Food insecurity is likely to get worse, and most conflict affected areas, particularly the south and west coast, are likely to fall into famine if food access does not improve. If al Hudaydah port suffers further damage and therefore reduced functioning capacity due to conflict, or the blockade on imports continues, food security is likely to deteriorate rapidly.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

Food security is likely to deteriorate particularly on the south and west coast. Between January-March over 7.1 million people were estimated to be facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food outcomes and a further 7 million Emergency (IPC Phase 4). By April the situation had deteriorated significantly, with an estimated 10.2 million people in IPC 3 and 6.8 million in IPC 4. The risk of falling into famine remains a threat if commercial imports deteriorate any further, and if active conflict cuts populations off from trade and humanitarian assistance.

Health

The Yemeni healthcare system is near collapse due to conflict, import restrictions, critical shortages of trained staff, and access constraints limiting the operation of humanitarian actors. As a result, only 45% of healthcare facilities are still functioning, even at reduced capacity. 14.8 million people lack access to healthcare, of which 8.8 million are in acute need of assistance. The cholera outbreak, which has resulted in over 910,000 cases since April, has created a public health crisis. Continuation of the import blockade is likely to deteriorate the situation even further.

WASH

At least 15.7 million people were in need of WASH assistance, with 7.3 million in acute need, before the cholera outbreak became a nationwide crisis. Many water sources have been contaminated. Damage to WASH infrastructure has hindered attempts to curb the outbreak. Humanitarian actors are working to repair infrastructure, but reliable fuel imports are critical to maintaining filtration systems, and this cannot be guaranteed as long as the blockade is maintained. Following these developments, WASH is likely to remain a priority need also in 2018.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Following reported attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in northern Rakhine, Myanmar's military retaliated with extreme force. Although military "clearance operations" officially ended on 5 September, continued violence and intimidation have driven an exodus of Rohingya into Bangladesh. 624,000 have fled since 25 August. This follows decades of state-led discrimination and persecution of Rohingya people. Bangladesh and humanitarian partners have worked to respond and increase relief operations but shortages in available land, NGO partners, and funding, combined with the large number of arrivals hamper the response in Cox's Bazar where they are arriving. Rohingya still in Myanmar face increasing restrictions on their access to food while widespread protection issues will likely continue in 2018. In Bangladesh, WASH, shelter and protection needs are of priority in the coming year.

CRISIS DRIVERS IN 2017

MYANMAR

Military clearance operations following ARSA attacks

Systematic targeting of Rohingya resulting in killings, sexual violence, and other violations

Access and movement restrictions impacting delivery and access to services

BANGLADESH

Pre-existing vulnerabilities of new arrivals enormity of needs complicate response

Vulnerability of host population underdeveloped areas with limited infrastructure

Immense scale of arrivals in areas with land shortages and overcrowded settlements

OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Food insecurity and marginalisation of Rohingya is likely to continue in Myanmar, while WASH and protection needs will remain a priority in Bangladesh.

PRIORITY CONCERNS IN 2018

MYANMAR

Food security & livelihoods

Protection

Nutrition

BANGLADESH

WASH

Shelter & NFIs

Protection

CURRENT SITUATION

The ARSA attacks were preceded by the growth and militarisation of the ARSA over the past year, evident from the increased level of organisation and sophistication of the recent attacks in comparison with the 2016 attacks (Amnesty 18/10/17). Increased recruitment was likely a response to mounting resentment towards the government following civilian targeting during the military crackdown last year, continued marginalisation, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Rakhine state. The Myanmar military, with the assistance of armed ethnic Rakhine groups, reacted with brutality, not only towards the ARSA but to the entire Rohingya population in what have been described as **"clearance operations"**. These operations led to a large-scale exodus of people into Bangladesh. Around 624,000 Rohingya refugees have fled since 25 August. The remaining Rohingya in Myanmar are of high concern as they face increasing restrictions on their access to food, essential services, and livelihoods, and humanitarian access is limited. The number of Rohingya still in Rakhine state is not known due to access limitations.

The disproportionate force used by the military highlighted **systematic discrimination** against the Rohingya. The OHCHR and Amnesty International have separately documented accounts regarding the treatment of Rohingya that are consistent with indicators of crimes against humanity as laid out in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC. They include unlawful killings, torture, rape, disappearances, and calculated attempts to deprive the population of conditions necessary for survival by measures such as denying access to markets (ICC 1998; OHCHR 10/17; Amnesty 10/17). Activities were

conducted by the military in a well-organised, coordinated, and systematic approach. They destroyed crops, livestock, and fields, and burned Rohingya villages while adjacent ethnic Rakhine villages remained untouched, demonstrating what appears to be an effort to force the Rohingya population out of Rakhine state. Cultural, religious, and other influential leaders have been arbitrarily detained (OHCHR 10/17; Amnesty 10/17).

Prior to the recent violence, a worsening food security situation had been reported in northern Rakhine (WFP 7/17). Now, with even tighter restrictions on movement and the shutdown of markets, food insecurity has almost certainly intensified, although access restrictions have prevented humanitarian partners from conducting comprehensive assessments. While the initial influx of Rohingya to Bangladesh reported violence as the reason for fleeing, the threat of starvation as well as ongoing reports of arson, looting, harassment, and loss of livelihoods are increasingly driving the exodus.

The situation is exacerbated by the inability of humanitarian actors to respond due to government **access restrictions.** Some national groups, the ICRC, and WFP have recently been granted access, possibly an indication that access may also open up for other agencies. However, the process for both national and international staff remains slow and unpredictable. In central Rakhine, as of 13 November, 150 national staff in Sittwe and 27 international staff were restricted from travelling to camps or villages outside of Sittwe town, demonstrating the ongoing nature of access constraints (OCHA 16/11/17). These restrictions are not only driven by the

government but also by local populations who perceive the UN and INGOs in Rakhine State as biased in favour of Rohingya populations, resulting in growing hostility to humanitarian agencies. Blockages of aid supplies intended for Rohingya by ethnic Rakhine groups were increasingly reported in the period after 25 August.

Restrictions on movement of the Rohingya population over the past five years has led to a dependency on aid as their livelihood opportunities are blocked. As such they are disproportionately affected by the restrictions on aid. Post 25 August, Rohingya movement has become even more constrained, limiting their access to food and essential services. There have been reports of self-imposed segregation measures by ethnic Rakhine communities in central Rakhine, who threaten to fine or impose other punishments on those who trade with Rohingya. The situation has been particularly serious in Minbya, Mrauk-U, and Kyauktaw. While it is possible that Rohingya will be permitted greater movement during the upcoming rice harvest in November, when they usually labour in the rice fields, overall indications are of worsening intercommunal tensions in central Rakhine between Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine communities (OCHA 16/11/17).

BANGLADESH: OVERVIEW 2017

CURRENT SITUATION

In Bangladesh, the Rohingya crisis has been a topic of political discussion in the lead-up to the elections that will take place in late 2018. General consensus exists among the public regarding the necessity of temporarily hosting the Rohingya, and opposition parties have accused the government of being too soft on Myanmar in light of the treatment of the Rohingya. However, Bangladesh is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and it does not recognise the Rohingya as refugees and as such is unlikely to host them for the long term (IRIN 23/10/17). The political climate means that the government has to find a way to accommodate the exodus in the short term, while also ensuring future repatriation to Myanmar (NYT 06/10/2017; IDSA 03/10/2017; The Wire 10/09/2017). Myanmar and Bangladesh signed a repatriation agreement on 23 November, with similar terms to the 1992 agreement, which included conditions such as required proof of residency in Myanmar. This may be difficult for most Rohingya, considering their stateless status and the speed with which they were forced to flee their homes, likely leaving any documentation behind. This casts doubt on the likelihood of returns occurring in the near future (DhakaTribune 26/11/17).

Local, national, and international organisations, together with the government have been responding in Cox's Bazar, where the vast majority of Rohingya have arrived. Their **pre-existing vulnerabilities** compound their high levels of need. Of the 624,000 that have arrived, 55% are children and 14% of households are female-headed. They are coming from food insecure areas of Myanmar and many are malnourished, with SAM rates as high as 7.5% (OCHA 20/11/17; UNHCR 21/11/17). A large number

of women and girls are survivors of sexual and gender based violence and have serious health and psychological needs on arrival. The influx is still ongoing and there are unconfirmed reports that there are still thousands of people waiting to make a water crossing. As boats have become more expensive, people are resorting to crossing on makeshift rafts and some have been swimming using plastic cooking oil containers as floatation devices.

Cox's Bazar is a vulnerable district that is now having to cope with both the current influx and the **vulnerable host population.** This is placing the district's already lacking infrastructure and basic services under immense strain. In combination with the new arrivals, the previous caseload of 300,000 Rohingya, and the local host community has brought the overall affected population to 1.2 million (HRP 2017). The district has moderate malnutrition and food insecurity, poverty is above the national average, and livelihood opportunities are scarce. Access to education is limited, especially for Rohingya. Water sources risk being depleted and many have already been affected by faecal contamination. It is also an area with high levels of criminality. The non-Rohingya community in the area is poor and vulnerable and could become agitated if new Rohingya arrivals receive assistance and they do not, potentially creating tension between refugees and host communities (HRP 2017). Physical access to some areas is difficult due to the lack of infrastructure and the impact of the rainy season, however the Bangladesh military is in the process of constructing roads to facilitate access to newly established camps (ECHO 30/10/17).

One of the reasons response in Cox's Bazar is difficult is the immense **scale of new arrivals** and the lack of NGO partners. There is excessive pressure on the existing settlements, which have become overcrowded and many new sites have spontaneously emerged as a result of the high influx. Due to lack of space, settlements are moving further away from the highway and access to sites is becoming one of the most challenging issues. This is hindering the construction of infrastructure and basic services. The lack of space is driving needs as crucial activities such as waste management cannot be organised. There are also operational challenges as project permits for Cox's Bazar are limited to three month periods and certain sectors, making it difficult to plan long-term activities or provide a comprehensive response (HRP 2017; ISCG 12/11/17).

MYANMAR: OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

Large-scale returns are unlikely in 2018. A lengthy repatriation process would be required to return such large numbers of refugees. In addition, military efforts to oust Rohingya were supported by hard-line Buddhists who are likely to retaliate against returns. They have already protested against potential repatriation, prompting domestic political considerations (FT 23/10/17).

As the ARSA have only a few hundred core members their capacity is likely to be diminished in 2018 without external support and so far they claim they will not align with other groups. Should mistreatment and marginalisation of the Rohingya continue, that may provide an incentive for new recruits. If they did mobilise enough support and capacity to attack, it would likely result in an extreme military crackdown and a high likelihood of violence spreading to central Rakhine, where there are around 120,000 Rohingya.

A strong anti-Muslim sentiment and the segregation of communities has already been reported indicating that the systematic discrimination against Rohingya will continue, and leading to further fears that the violence could spread to central Rakhine. If access restrictions continue this will disproportionately affect Rohingya given their high dependency on aid due to lack of access to livelihoods.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

Food security & livelihoods

Likely to worsen as crops and farmland have been burned, and displacement, insecurity, and movement restrictions will impact the primary harvest season and planting for the secondary season. Reports of the government harvesting the crops of those who have fled their lands increases the likelihood of food insecurity among Rohingya who are still displaced in Rakhine and will not have access to their harvests. Continued segregation measures will impact on the ability of Rohingya to trade, further contributing to food insecurity.

Nutrition

An estimated 80,500 children under the age of five were expected to be in need of treatment for acute malnutrition before the current crisis (OCHA 10/07/17). Remaining Rohingya are likely to experience a significant deterioration of their nutritional situation if food access remains limited and aid continues to be restricted.

Protection

Violence and intimidation of Rohingya, not only by the military but also by ethnic Rakhine, raises concerns for those remaining in Rakhine state as well as for any who may be repatriated in 2018. Issues of land ownership and the proposed resettlements raise protection concerns for Rohingya who were forced to leave their homes. The segregation in central Rakhine and the protection risks that Rohingya there may face from ethnic Rakhine creates further concern.

BANGLADESH: OUTLOOK FOR 2018

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS

The operating environment may improve as approvals for NGO partners are speeding up. However, the inability to plan long-term response, as well as land shortages will continue to create challenges for responding agencies. The high influx of the new arrivals, many of whom are likely to suffer from psychological trauma following the violence, combined with the protection risks arising from the overcrowded and underserviced environment in Cox's Bazar means that the population will likely be entirely dependent on humanitarian aid throughout 2018.

Tensions could increase with host communities in this resource-scarce environment, particularly in the event of a disease outbreak, or the depletion of a water table. Increased prices of goods and transportation are already negatively impacting the local population (FAO16/11/17). The risk of a communicable disease outbreak will remain high in 2018 due to overcrowded living conditions, inadequate WASH facilities, high malnutrition rates, and low vaccination coverage. Extremist groups may try and recruit disenfranchised youth who are living in poor conditions in Cox's Bazar without access to livelihoods or any prospects for the future.

PRIORITY CONCERNS

WASH

Overcrowding and overburdening of existing facilities are contributing to the high risk of a public health epidemic if WASH is not continually prioritised. This is likely to remain a priority in 2018 as progress on WASH is difficult due to lack of access to sites and the scale of response needed. Cholera is of concern as it is endemic in Bangladesh. Over 36,000 cases of AWD have been identified between 25 August and 11 November, 15,000 among children under five (WHO 12/11/17).

Shelter & NFIs

The area allocated for camps is not big enough for UNHCR camp standards and the Site Management Sector estimate that only part of the land is useable. Spontaneous settlements have disrupted the natural flow of water and increased the risk of landslides and flooding, putting people living in rudimentary shelters at risk. Current shelters will not withstand floods and cyclones - this is a priority for response before the next cyclone season (April–June). Land availability and access will remain key challenges.

Protection

Areas of necessary intervention will be multiple, with particular focus on mental health and survivors of sexual violence. Women and girls lack access to basic services due to the protection risks they face when trying to do so. Fear of harassment, trafficking, and kidnapping are of key concern in the Cox's Bazar area, which has numerous trafficking rings. Protection needs are expected to be long-term as they are linked to the violence experienced while fleeing Rakhine state as well as the current living conditions.

SEE THE CRISIS
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