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2.16.2. Violence against women and girls by Boko Haram and treatment post-violence

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: February 2019
*Minor updates added October 2021

COI summary

[Main COI references: Targeting, 3.1.7, Country focus, 4.4.3]

It is reported that the incidents of gender-based violence have increased significantly with the insurgency of Boko Haram in the North-East. In the period from 2009 to 2016, Boko Haram has abducted approximately 2 000 women and girls, subjecting them to sexual abuses, including rape, forced marriage to their captors, being sold in the market as ‘war booty’, forced participation in insurgent operations, including as suicide bombers, as well as to forced labour. According to recent reports, Boko Haram has continued to abduct civilians, and in particular women and children [Security situation 2021, 2.10.2.1].

Some women who have been forced to marry Boko Haram fighters, or who have been abducted, raped or enslaved, have been rejected by their families, stigmatised and have faced difficulties reintegrating in their societies, where sex outside marriage is not acceptable. Women with children from Boko Haram members are reported to face even more difficulties. However, stigmatisation varies between families, individuals, and communities and other women who had escaped Boko Haram have been re-integrated.

Risk analysis

Women and girls could be exposed to acts by Boko Haram which are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. killing, sexual violence, forced marriage). Where the risk is discrimination and/or mistreatment by society and/or by the family (e.g. rejection by family and stigmatisation after abuse by Boko Haram), the individual assessment of whether this could amount to persecution should take into account the severity and/or repetitiveness of the acts or whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures.

Not all women and girls would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution in relation to violence by Boko Haram. The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: area of origin (mainly where Boko Haram operates), age, family status (e.g. single mother), having been subjected to abuse, family/society perceptions, support network (family or other), etc.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion and/or religion (particularly in the case of persecution by Boko Haram, see also Individuals targeted by Boko Haram). Persecution of this profile may also be for reasons of membership of particular social group. For example, women and girls who have been abused by Boko Haram may be subjected to persecution based on their common background which cannot be changed (past experience of abuse) and their distinct identity in the respective area of Nigeria (in relation to stigmatisation).

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