



Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR)

Girei LGA, Adamawa State, Nigeria

June 2022

OVERVIEW

Girei local government area (LGA) in Adamawa State, Northeast Nigeria, is located in the central part of the State, hosting an estimated population of 129,995.¹ The main occupation of the people in the area is crop farming and animal rearing, with the area providing much of the animal products available in the LGA and the state.

The conflict in Girei is linked to tensions between herders and crop farmers, which became more intense, widespread, and destructive in 2016.² The conflict led to the destruction of crops, burning of rangelands, and blockage of stock routes, exacerbated insecurity, and led to a loss of quality services, social support, livelihoods sources, properties, and livestock.³

In 2021, voluntary return movements were observed to increase throughout the region, with returnees setting up spontaneous settlements and sites across Adamawa and Borno states; as of July 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) has tracked an estimated 10,140 people among the refugee returnees across informal settlements in Adamawa.⁴ Between October and December 2021, the International Office for Migration (IOM) registered a total of 60,581 movements in Adamawa and Borno States, comprising 52,308 arrivals and 8,273 departures.⁵ As of March 2022, while the security situation in the region remains volatile, returnees continued to arrive to LGAs in Adamawa and Borno.⁷

However, there are critical information gaps in the areas of return in terms of the availability of security, livelihoods, and basic services in these areas. To address some of these information gaps related to IDPs and returnees, REACH launched a Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) assessment at the start of March 2022, to better understand needs, current displacement patterns, and returns in these areas. The ROAR assessment looks at the motivations behind the return, along with the current context related to protection issues, livelihoods, and the provision of basic services in areas of Girei that are experiencing returns.

¹ National Population Commission (2006). Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, Lagos, Nigeria. Pp. 24 and 94.

² Crop Farmers and Herders Conflicts In Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria: Causes, Repercussions And Resolutions

³ Crop Farmers and Herders Conflicts In Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria: Causes, Repercussions And Resolutions

⁴ IOM Nigeria Mission (July 2021). Adamawa state - Weekly situation report no. 5.

⁵ IOM Nigeria Mission (December 2021). DTM Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT) Quarterly report.

⁶ UNHCR (April 2022). Nigeria: Northeast Nigeria Operational Update.

⁷ IOM Nigeria Mission (March 2022) DTM ETT.

KEY FINDINGS

Displacement and Return

- Key informants (KIs) said the main reasons **why IDPs chose not to return to their area of origin (AoO) in Girei LGA were a lack of security, livelihood opportunities, and the fact that their property had been destroyed or stolen.** Access to farmland and space for the rearing of livestock in the areas of displacement (AoD) also provided IDPs with reasons to stay.
- Returnee KIs commonly reported the **desire to find a source of income was a crucial reason for returnees to decide to return to Girei. The restoration of security in the AoO,** as well as reuniting with family and friends, also reportedly influenced returnees' decisions.

Protection

- Returnee KIs commonly reported feeling safe in their AoO because they believed that the security situation had improved. Finding suggest that **returnees hold a common perception that peace had been restored between farmers and herders,** with one subject-matter expert (SME) KI noting that this had been achieved through the support of state government officials and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, while some returnee KIs reported perceiving there to be peace between the groups, some interviewed IDPs believed that tensions remained and that the conflict continued.

Livelihoods

- SMEs and returnee KIs reported that **households' earnings were not sufficient to meet basic needs** in Girei LGA and that households therefore resorted to various coping mechanisms, such as **relying on family and friends, reducing food consumption, and begging.** According to several returnee KIs and one SME, **farming and fishing were the most prevalent sources of livelihoods** in the area of displacement and AoO.

Access to Basic Services

- According to three returnee KIs and one SME, residents in Girei generally have access to clean drinking water. However, some SME and returnee KIs mentioned that the **supply of publicly available water is insufficient, as a result of which residents reportedly resort to buying water.** KIs said that there is no water treatment plant in the area. People in the community are reportedly using aquatabs, aluminum sulfate, or are boiling their water to clean it.
- SME KIs indicated that all **healthcare facilities lacked sufficient equipment, medication, and staff to adequately meet the needs of people** in Girei. As a result, community members reportedly **must travel to major cities to access specialised healthcare services.** Alternatively, KIs reported that some individuals seek out unlicensed medicine shops and traditional healers.
- According to KIs, children in the AoO have access to formal education, which is supported by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). **Some schools reportedly run extra shifts due to overpopulation, while some classrooms are closed during the rainy season because of leaking roofs.** KIs noted that schools lack classrooms, writing boards, chairs, and desks.

METHODOLOGY

REACH enumerators collected data from 19 KIs from Girei LGA in Adamawa State. The KIs included: five returnees in Girei, six internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Girei who remained in displacement at the time of data collection, one community leader from Girei, and eight subject-matter experts (SMEs) with specialist knowledge about either education, WASH, protection, security, health, or livelihoods, in Girei. KIs were identified through local guides in the area and REACH KI networks, followed by a purposive sampling approach. Data collection took place both in-person and remotely by telephone, from March 3rd to March 10, 2022. For more information on the methodology, please refer to the [Terms of Reference](#).

LIMITATIONS

1. Findings from KIs should be interpreted as indicative only; the sample is not statistically representative of the entire population and hence findings cannot be generalised with a known level of precision.
2. Population figures are provided as estimates rather than exact figures and are based on the perceptions of KIs.
3. While KIs were asked to report on the community-level, during the interviews, some KIs (IDPs and returnees) reported on their personal experiences, which might not be representative of the experiences in the wider community.
4. The tool for this ROAR did not contain specific questions on food security; this dimension will be added in future rounds.

Table 1: Number and type of KIs

Type/Area of Expertise	Number
Education SME	2
Protection SME	1
WASH SME	1
Health SME	2
Livelihood SME	1
Community leader	1
Returnee	5
IDP	6

MOVEMENT INTENTIONS

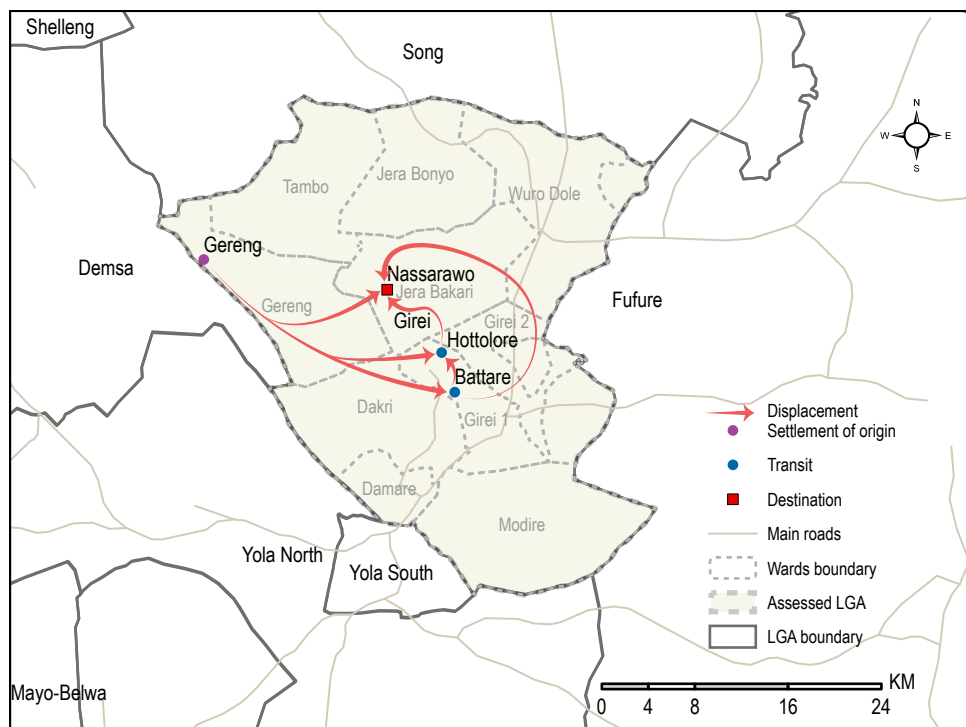
Why are IDPs not returning ?

All IDP KIs reported that the restoration of a stable security situation is a factor in whether IDPs would want to return to their area of origin (AoO), **marking security as the most reported factor in return decisions.** According to three KIs, having a source of income and setting up schools, especially for children, are also important factors in making that decision. Two KIs reported that access to farmland, the provision of ranches for cattle, the return of ownership of lost property in the AoO, and repair of damaged properties could also influence their decision to go back to Girei. Furthermore, other reasons given were the

provision of markets, hospitals, water, and shelter, as reported by one KI.

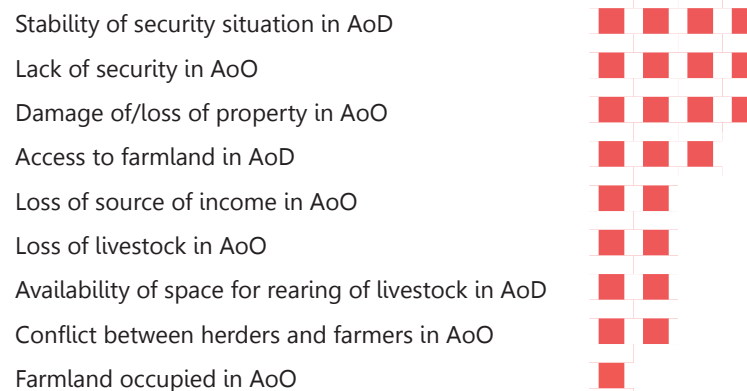
The majority of IDP KIs reported that many IDPs made no attempts to return with their families, citing the fact that peace in the AoO has yet to be restored and that they feel safer in the area of displacement, while three KI reported that the availability of farmland in the area of displacement was an important reason to stay. Two IDPs KIs, reported perceiving that some IDPs had made attempts to return to their area of origin (AoO). **However, perceptions of insecurity in the AoO and being hindered from leaving the areas of displacement by individuals were mentioned as barriers to returning.**

Map 1: IDPs displacement movement journeys



‡ Each block represents one KI

Figure 1: Reasons for not returning to Girei, reported by six IDP KIs‡



The majority of IDP KIs reported **receiving information about the situation in their AoO from friends and family**. Two KIs stated that they obtained such information by traveling to the AoO themselves. They also sourced information from travelers to their area of origin. One KI reported radio as a source of information. IDP KIs reported that the types of information IDPs receive about their AoO mostly include information on the occupation of their properties, farmlands, and houses by new inhabitants. Information on security and the peaceful coexistence that exists between farmers and herders was also reported by a few KIs.

Priority needs in the area of displacement

In terms of basic needs required for IDPs in their area of displacement, IDP KIs most commonly reported a need for education, health, and water (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Reported required priority needs for IDPs in the AoD, reported by six IDP KIs‡



Why are returnees returning?

Three returnee KIs reported that **seeking livelihood opportunities was a major factor that contributed to their return to Girei, including the availability of jobs and land for farming and fishing.** According to many returnee KIs, the restoration of peace between farmers and herders and an improved security situation were key factors that changed in the AoO and influenced decisions to return. Some KIs reported the return of ownership of property as the reason for return, while one KI mentioned a desire to reconnect with family and friends having informed decisions to return.

One returnee KI reported perceiving that the people in the host community in their area of displacement had been becoming uncomfortable and fearful of being attacked by herders' men because they were hosting IDPs, a development that may have influenced decisions to return.

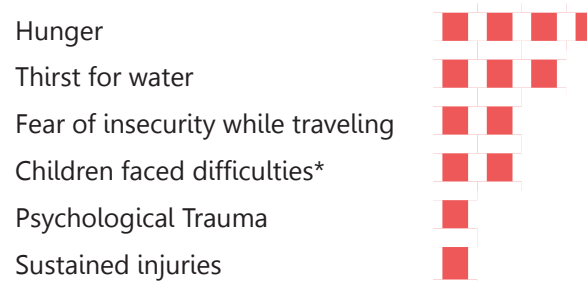
Returnee KIs reported wanting to live comfortably and move voluntarily back to their AoO; engage in business and trading; have access to their farmland; and want their children to have access to education in their own AoO.

Returnees source of information about AoO and journey experiences

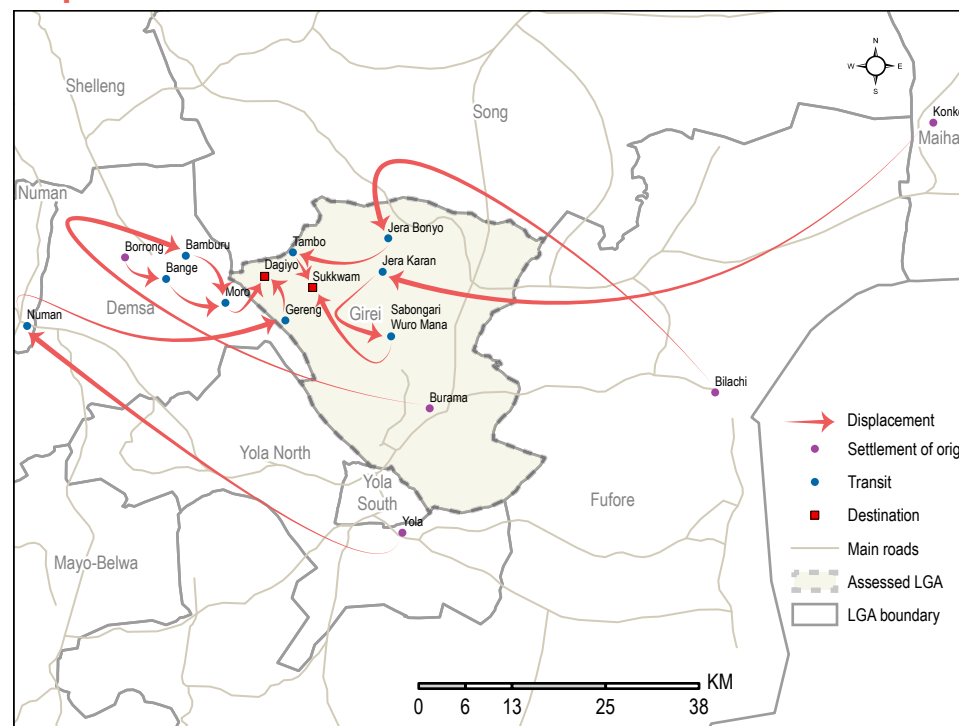
A majority of returnee KIs reported **neighbouring communities, friends, and family members** had been their main sources of information about the situation in their area of origin while they had been displaced. One KI reported having received information through the government.

Returnee KIs commonly reported that most returnees had returned to their AoO using motorcycles or vehicles, reportedly generally costing around 1,000 Nigerian naira per person, or that they had traveled by foot. Though the travel time varied for different returnees, some KIs said the trip took roughly two hours, while for some it took two days, depending on the mode of transport. All returnee KIs reported that people commonly encountered challenges while returning to Girei, predominantly facing hunger and thirst en route.

Figure 3: Barriers faced while returning to Girei, reported by five returnee KIs[‡]



Map 2: Return movements



[‡] Each block represents one KI
^{*} Children were exhausted and children were complaining about thirst, were merged to create children faced difficulties.

PROTECTION

Access to legal resource

One SME KI perceived that some community members have grievances among them that are yet to be addressed. The KI contributed these grievances mainly to farmland encroachment (which reportedly is part of the root causes of the tensions in the region) and noted that there are also grievances held against non-indigenous people from outside the community farming within their AoO. In addition, one SME KI also noted perceiving that herders live in constant fear of retaliation attacks. However, findings from the returnee KIs seem to contradict this narrative, with all of the interviewed returnees reporting perceiving that community members feel safe in their AoO. Two returnee KIs specifically reported perceiving that farmers and herders now live peacefully together.

Several SME and returnee KIs reported that many Girei residents lost legal documents, which reportedly were stolen, misplaced, or destroyed during the crisis. All documents can reportedly be replaced in court, but according to KIs, people would have to swear an affidavit to retrieve those certificates and documents, and the process can take around two months. One KI, however, reported that not all lost documents can be renewed.

SME and returnee KIs alike reported that there are both formal and informal conflict resolutions mechanisms available in the AoO, most of which are reportedly headed by community/religious leaders. In general, KIs reported perceiving that people prefer using informal mechanisms, reportedly to avoid costs and time on court cases, some of which SME KIs reported could take a year or more.

While findings suggest a general preference for informal conflict resolution channels, KIs reported perceiving that the use of such informal channels appears to be gradually decreasing. According to an SME KI, courts, law firms, and legal committees are more readily available in the region now than compared to before the crisis, and people seem to be growing more aware of the need to hire lawyers for familial, land-related, or civil disputes.

Perceptions of safety and security

All returnee KIs, as well as the SME, reported perceiving that residents feel safe, which they contributed to the restoration of peace between farmers and herders, which was reportedly achieved with help from the government and

NGOs. In addition, two returnee KIs added that community vigilante groups were also involved in the provision of security services in the community.

While findings generally suggest residents feel relatively safe, the community leader KI reported that workshops on peace and conflict resolution and the creation of more awareness and sensitisation about peaceful living among residents could be beneficial in further improving the perceptions of safety and security of community members.

Freedom of movement

Three returnee KIs reported that community members generally face no particular restrictions on movement within Girei. Nevertheless, one KI indicated that a curfew has been imposed by the village head and district head, mostly between 6 pm to 6 am, to minimise the risk of kidnappings in the community.

Furthermore, KIs reported that community members are advised to move in groups, especially when going to the farms, and to farm within a close range of the town. One KI indicated that movements are restricted from Dagiyo to Jimo and in the Wuro settlement.

LIVELIHOODS

According to most KIs, the main sources of income for residents of Girei are farming and fishing. One SME KI estimated that around 2000 households have a means of income in the area, with around 1500 households relying solely on agriculture as a source of income. Other sources of livelihood mentioned by KIs were petty trading, cattle rearing, making makeshift shelters, selling water, tricycle driving, cap sewing, skilled labour, or working as a government employee. One KI noted that no new sources of income have been introduced in the area since the crisis.

One KI indicated that around 15% - 20% of individuals in Girei have no means of income and mostly rely on family and friends. A KI estimated that around 700 individuals in Girei are unemployed, explaining that these individuals find it challenging to get jobs within their community.

In line with these findings, KIs commonly reported perceiving that households'

earnings were generally not sufficient to meet basic costs and that some households had to rely on family and friends to cope with a lack of access to basic needs. Another KI indicated that low-income farming families supplement their source of income with other petty jobs. Other reported coping mechanisms included reducing daily food consumption, and begging.

While the SME KI reported that there was no formal vocational training centre available to residents in Girei, one KI indicated that there are some training opportunities, including training on tailoring, carpentry, tire vulcanising, as well training on how to repair cars, bicycles, tricycles, and phones.

SME KIs reported perceiving that sources of income had been much better before the crisis. These KIs noted that cattle rearing had been easier, fresh cow's milk had been cheaper, and people had been able to move more freely before the crisis. According to KIs, the crisis had a negative impact on agriculture, particularly because farmlands had reportedly been contaminated with UXOs. As a result of these processes, KIs noted that farmers' yields were generally lower than before the crisis.

A community leader suggested that providing opportunities for community members, particularly women and young people, to participate in skill acquisition and empowerment programmes, as well as the provision of grants, would improve the livelihood situation in the area. KIs also noted that providing fertilizer and pesticides to farmers will improve the farms' produce.

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Water

Reports concerning access to clean drinking water in Girei were mixed, with an SME and two returnee KIs reporting that residents have access to potable water, while two returnee KIs reported that residents have no access to clean drinking water. Some KIs reported a presence of public and private sources for drinkable water, including boreholes and handpumps. Streams and boreholes are also reportedly used as water points for other needs, such as for washing clothes or other daily activities.

Water is supplied within a certain period per day, for about 2–3 hours, which reportedly causes a long queue at the water point. Some people reportedly travel long distances to get water. Some KIs reported that the supply

of water is insufficient, leading residents to buy water at the cost of 15 naira per gallon. Two SME and two returnee KIs also said that there is no water treatment plant in the area. According to KIs, people in the community are using aquatabs, aluminium sulfate, or boiling to clean their water.

One KI reported a perception that Girei residents face restrictions and barriers to accessing water. The reason for this is reportedly that water point operators provide water at their own discretion and convenience, causing a shortage of water supply, so residents are unable to access water at their convenience. At times this reportedly leaves residents to resort to other sources, such as streams.

SME and returnee KIs reported perceiving that the current supply of water is insufficient compared to before the crisis. Indeed, according to one KI, while stream water had sporadically been used for daily activities prior to the crisis, it had not generally been used for drinking; following the crisis, the water supply had reportedly become scarce, forcing some residents to use the stream water for drinking purposes, despite it potentially being contaminated.

One SME KI reported that water infrastructure has been damaged, such as to boreholes and hand pumps, noting that some attempts had been made to repair them. However, a WASH expert KI and community leader KI reported that the establishment of more boreholes and water pumps in the area and the repair of damaged public boreholes would improve the supply of water. KIs also mentioned that more staff was needed to maintain water infrastructure and water points.

Healthcare

Findings on access to healthcare are inconclusive; while some KIs reported residents have access to a functional healthcare facility, other KIs reported the opposite. This could indicate that, while healthcare facilities are available, they are not accessible to all residents, or that the types of care available at these facilities are not always the types of care needed by community members. Despite reports from some SME and returnee KIs of a healthcare center being available, other KIs noted that healthcare services are not functional and that residents have to travel to another town to access healthcare. One KI reported that some residents also get healthcare services from nearby unlicensed medicine stores and local traditional healers, attributing this to the cumulative cost of treatment.

Both healthcare SMEs interviewed reported that emergency services and surgery were not available, except for minor cases. According to these KIs, **more severe cases are referred to tertiary healthcare centers in major cities**, a delay that reportedly implies risks of complications for patients needing emergency care. For quick, accessible care, some residents prefer to visit traditional bone setters, according to an SME KI.

One KI noted that maternity care is available at the healthcare facility, though referrals are made to tertiary healthcare centers in major cities for issues that are complicated. Reportedly, patients in need of psychosocial support are referred to tertiary healthcare facilities, due to a lack of such services in Girei.

KIs said that consultation services in Girei are provided at no cost, including services such as HIV screening, family planning programmes, antenatal services, and routine immunisation. However, one KI noted that the cost of accessing healthcare services, particularly the cost of medicine, prevents the more vulnerable or impoverished residents from seeking treatment.

According to KIs, there is a perception that healthcare services were better before the crisis. One KI reported perceiving that the demand for healthcare services has increased compared to the period before the crisis, but that most of the health infrastructures are damaged. Other reasons provided by KIs were that medicine was cheaper before the crisis. Moreover, SME KIs reported that healthcare facilities currently do not have sufficient materials and equipment. While attempts have been made to restock, the facilities reportedly have no means to acquire this equipment.

In addition, according to KIs, the current healthcare centers are experiencing a shortage of medical staff due to most medical staff having been transferred elsewhere during the crisis. Two KIs mentioned that there were not enough doctors in the area to meet the medical needs of the people. Moreover, there are no female doctors and medical specialists in healthcare centers in Girei, according to several KIs.

In light of the challenges mentioned, the health SME KI recommended hiring experienced medical and technical staff, increasing remuneration for healthcare workers, and providing medical equipment, water, and electricity to healthcare facilities. Moreover, an ambulance would enable residents to acquire referrals more easily for emergency cases, according to SME KIs.

Education

According to KIs, children in the area have access to formal education, which is supported by UNICEF. However, some KIs noted that there is a perception that some children still do not have access to formal education. KIs mentioned that public and private primary schools (co-educational), public government schools (boys only), private secondary schools (co-educational), and public senior secondary schools (co-educational) are available in the area. According to one KI, children have access to informal education, while other KIs pointed out that no informal school exists.

KIs noted that schools lacked functioning classrooms, chairs, desks and writing boards. It was reported by three KIs that some **schools run shifts due to overpopulation, while some lessons cannot be held during the rainy season due to flooding and leaking roofs.** Most of the buildings in the area are in need of repairs or renovation, and some of the classrooms are unfit for studying. KIs also reported that schools do not have enough teachers, with teachers posted to these areas reportedly having rejected offers due to insecurity.

Notably, the main barriers mentioned by three KIs were the long travel distances to schools, as well as a lack of uniforms and school materials. It was reported that the fear of being kidnapped on the way to school is also a barrier for children. Other barriers noted were lack of water, access roads to schools, funds for school fees, lunch allowance, and parent teacher association levy.

One SME KI noted that before the crisis, children did not go to school, but with the current support of humanitarian actors in the area, parents have become more willing to send their children to school since the crisis. Two returnee KIs reported that the situation regarding education has improved since the crisis.

According to two Educational SMEs, both school teachers, and one community leader KI, improving school infrastructure, building more classrooms, and providing water and school supplies such as chairs, desks, blackboards, shoes, and uniforms is needed to boost education in Girei LGA. Other areas of improvement indicated by KIs were the provision of good access roads to schools, the recruitment of additional teachers, and holding seminars for teachers and parents.