

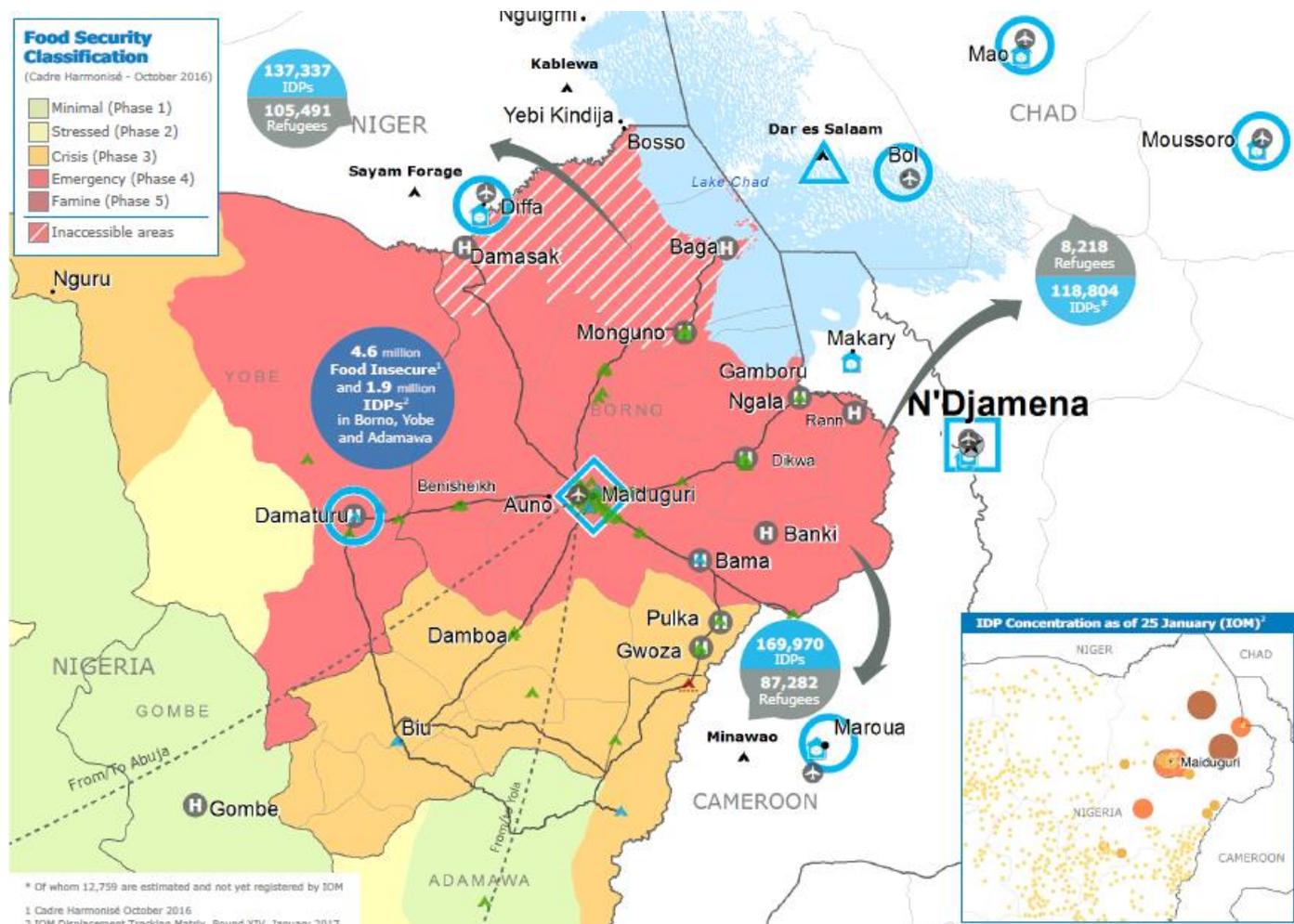
Ready to Respond

Why is preparedness worth it?

And how it helps to better respond to the Lake Chad Region crisis

In the Lake Chad Region, that includes part of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, attacks by Boko Haram have uprooted and displaced 2.3 million people to date. Violence, combined with chronic drought, cholera and poverty have created one of the most complex and severe humanitarian crises in today's world.

Nigeria and Lake Chad Region situation - February 2017:



WFP emergency dashboard – February 2017: Full document at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-emergency-dashboard-february-2017>

Out of the 17 million people living in the Lake Chad Region, some [10.7 million](#) are in critical need of food, water and shelter. Delivery of assistance, however, is made very challenging due to the volatile security situation and remoteness of the region.

Communities in the area are also facing the devastating impact of climate change and excessive irrigations as the Lake waters are drying up and many people are no longer able to live from fishery (waters went from 25,000 km² superficies in the 1960's to just about 2,500 km² today).

In this fragile environment, new humanitarian crises are susceptible to flare up at any time. Four UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR and OCHA) with the support of DFID, have therefore decided to invest together in the [Ready to Respond](#) Project to get the region better prepared for further escalation of violence and potential new emergencies - while in parallel keep responding to immediate and urging needs.

Starting in 2014, the agencies have undertaken a whole range of preventive actions in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger: they prepositioned relief items such as food, communication equipment and educational kits for children, they signed operational agreements with partners, assessed infrastructure for aid supply, organized emergency training for UN and partner staff – along with other preparatory measures that help the humanitarian community better respond to the ongoing crisis in the region.

Below are some of the most relevant examples of how preparedness helped in providing better and faster assistance to those in need, while making better use of resources and reducing carbon emissions.

Working alongside governments

In **Nigeria**, where violence uprooted 1.9 million people in the Northeast region, WFP and UNICEF have worked closely with the government to strengthen their staff capacity in responding to disasters. Over 200 participants from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and its state-level sister SEMA have followed hands-on trainings and learned how to conduct food security analysis, manage a warehouse, use emergency communications equipment and run biometric registration of beneficiaries.

This last training proved very useful when the 50 staff who had learned how to make registration using [SCOPE](#) (the WFP beneficiary management platform) were able to rapidly collect data on the needs of people displaced in June 2016 at the border with Niger. From this information WFP could design and deliver food assistance in a timely manner to 20,000 people through cash-based-transfers.

While food insecurity remains the greatest concern in Northeast Nigeria with [5.1 million projected food insecure in 2017](#), the Ready to Respond Project helped to dramatically increase the number of people reached over the past few months: food assistance went from 160,000 people in October 2016 to over one million in December and in January, an unprecedented achievement in the area.

Having resources in the right place

Prepositioning relief items close to where crises are likely to happen not only helps to quickly access and distribute them when an emergency occurs, it also lowers carbon emissions by reducing transportation.

Under the Project, UNICEF prepositioned supplies in Nigeria in locations where the risk of crises is high in the volatile Northeast regions. This proved of most use in 2015 when clashes erupted in the area and the agency was able to quickly access and distribute education materials to 15,000 children.

Likewise in **Chad**, WFP had strategically placed 50 metric tons of [high energy biscuits and ready-to-use food](#), and when the situation deteriorated that same year in neighboring Nigeria, WFP could deliver food to displaced people and refugees in Chad in less than 48 hours - ensuring a rapid and cost-effective assistance to those fleeing violence. Once again in June 2016, following attacks by Boko Haram in Diffa, Niger, UNICEF was able to treat 6,000 children affected by severe acute malnutrition and provide sanitation facilities for 30,000 affected people using its pre-positioned supplies.

WFP also managed to quickly set up an **operational hub** for humanitarian workers in the remote area of Bol in Chad (along the Nigerian border) by deploying prefabricated offices that had been placed in advance in the area. WFP was therefore among the first respondents to the crisis in 2015 in a region that saw very few humanitarian actors until mid-2016. During several months, the agency was even directly implementing food distributions due to the limited presence of cooperating partners.

Today, the humanitarian community's presence is reinforced in the region with the establishment of additional bases and is planning to strengthen its hub for aid workers there - for instance with a UNHAS connection to the capital city of Chad (N'Djamena), making it easier to reach the hundreds of thousands of conflict-affected people with lifesaving assistance in over 60 displacement sites scattered in hard-to-access areas.

Monitoring people's needs in hard-to-reach areas

In **Niger**, the Diffa region that shares borders with Nigeria has also seen massive population's movements in the past years with currently [over 105,000 refugees and 137,000 internally displaced people](#). As part of the Ready to Respond Project, WFP has introduced the mobile Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (mVAM) in Diffa, a useful survey that uses mobile phones to rapidly collect data in regions difficult to access, while also allowing to notice population's movement. These surveys capture information on food consumption, dietary diversity and market behavior of the region's population, which is then used to design rapid assistance if the situation deteriorates.



Meeting with beneficiaries in Diffa to test using mVAM and discuss their thoughts on the value of the tool, October 2016

In **Cameroon** this system is also in use and alerts humanitarian actors when the food security situation gets worse. WFP is monitoring the vulnerability of displaced populations in the highly insecure area of the extreme north of the country in support to the government's early warning and disaster risk management strategies, thereby participating to strengthen national preparedness capacity

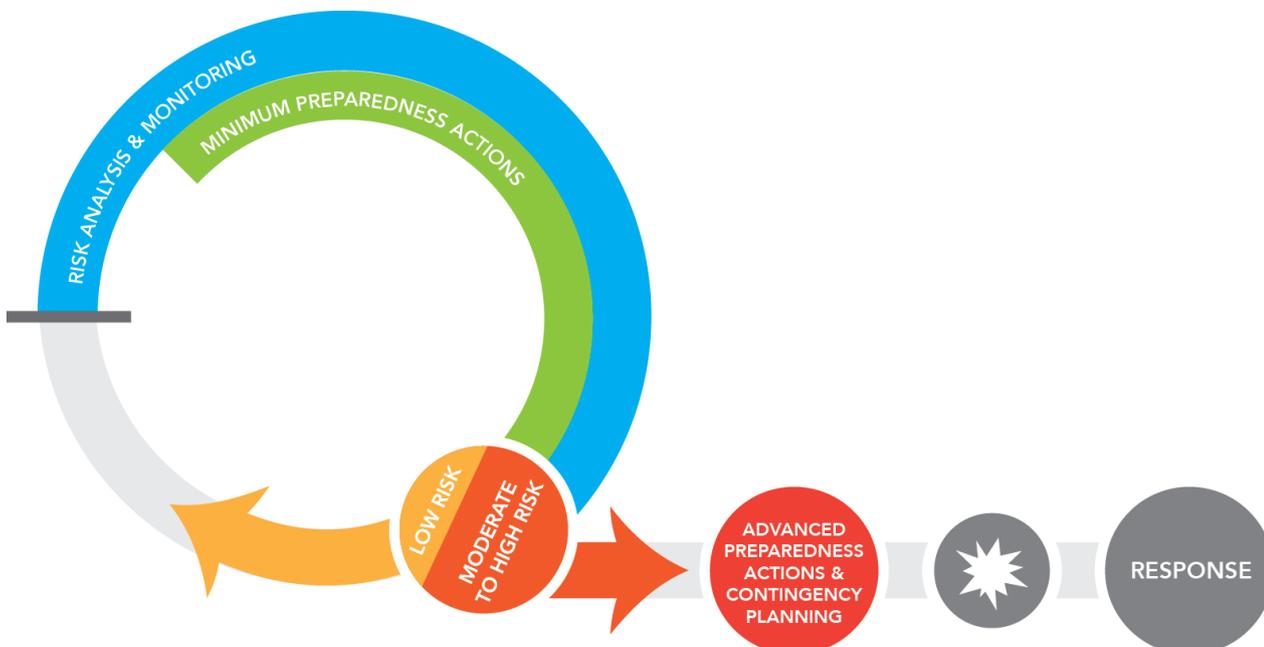
Besides, WFP set up its first beneficiary feedback mechanism in Cameroon to enhance its accountability and interaction with beneficiaries by allowing them to call directly when they have questions or complaints about WFP food assistance. A telephone hotline is connected to a platform that allows WFP's personnel to receive timely complaints and address problems at an early stage.

Enhancing communications and security

Another useful preventive measure was the joint establishment by UN agencies of life-saving digital radio coverage at all times in remote parts of the Diffa region of Niger. Prefabricated containers were also installed in these volatile areas and provide safe office and housing for staff during tense periods when evacuation is not possible. Thanks to these facilities and improved connectivity, humanitarian actors can now spend consecutive days in the region, travel and communicate any new threat or displacement they witness.

Coordinating preparedness efforts to achieve greater impact

At the **regional level**, UN agencies also worked together to prepare for emergencies following the [Emergency Response Preparedness](#) (ERP) approach led by OCHA, including in countries affected by the Nigeria crisis. The ERP provides a set of essential actions that help humanitarian workers establish a minimum level of preparedness and ensure coordination prior to a disaster: from risk monitoring to information management and operational arrangements. The agencies organized a regional workshop in Dakar in February 2016, to train a pool of facilitators who can in turn assist countries to get better prepared in a coordinated way. After the workshop, the participants provided training in their own countries and supported the development of the minimum preparedness measures in Niger, Chad and in Cameroon. In the latter, the training led to the development of a contingency plan which will serve as a basis for initial planning within the first weeks of an emergency.



More information on the ERP at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/preparedness/erp-approach>