HIGHLIGHTS

- Three million people in the Lake Chad region are facing severe food shortages.
- In Nigeria’s Borno and Yobe states, 800,000 people need immediate assistance.
- Clashes between herders and farmers in Côte d'Ivoire displace over 6,000 people.
- Between January and April, DRC reports 5,757 cholera cases.
- Ebola resurfaces for the third time in Liberia, Guinea sees its first flare-up.

Rising food insecurity across Lake Chad Basin

Food insecurity in the Lake Chad region, already at crisis levels, is expected to further deepen as families exhaust their last reserves and the lean season progresses. Three million people are currently facing severe food shortages. The majority of the food insecure people are in Nigeria’s north-eastern Borno and Yobe states.

KEY FIGURES

- People displaced in Lake Chad Basin: 2.4M
- Severely food insecure people in Lake Chad Basin: 2.9M
- People facing crisis level of food insecurity in the Sahel: 6.7M

SAHEL FUNDING

US $1.9 billion requested in 2016

12% funded

In this issue

- Lake Chad food insecurity on the rise P.1
- Sahel food insecurity remains high P.3
- New displacements in Côte d’Ivoire P.5
- Ebola resurfaces in Guinea and Liberia P.6
- Regional update on epidemics P.7
- Sahel funding update P.8
Immediate emergency assistance required

According to a joint UN multi-sectoral assessment, carried out in April, in Borno alone, some 1.6 million people are facing severe food insecurity, with more than 550,000 in urgent need of immediate food assistance. In Yobe, 255,000 people (200,000 people in rural areas and 55,000 IDPs and host populations in Damaturu, the state capital) are severely food insecure.

With the upcoming rainy season, food insecurity in north-eastern Nigeria is expected to further worsen between May and September, when the number of people in urgent need is likely to increase. Rainfall is forecast to be unstable and abnormally low in the region.

Depleted reserves

Cereal stocks across households in Chad’s western Lac region are depleted, as reserves were shared with the displaced. Families now depend on markets, where supply shortages have been reported, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

In Cameroon, displacement, conflict and disrupted livelihoods have left some 203,000 people severely food insecure. IDP figures in the Far North region now stand at 170,000, a seven per cent over the last four months.

Niger’s southern Diffa region, which hosts some 100,000 displaced people, is expected to see the highest levels of food insecurity in the country. Already, almost 160,000 are severely food insecure. As in the other conflict-hit areas, the adversity of the conflict has stocked hunger among the local communities and the displaced people.

FEWS NET foresees the current food insecurity persisting in Diffa until at least September, particularly in the areas around Komadougou River - a natural border between Niger and Nigeria - due to insecurity.

In Chad, there will be a heavy dependence of households on markets, particularly in areas reporting large shortfalls in cereal production and in the western Lac region.

Dysfunctional markets

Several markets in the region have been destroyed by attacks. Others have been temporarily or permanently closed as a preventive measure against further possible attacks. Border closures and insecurity have forced traders to reduce activities or seek alternative, at times longer, routes. As a result of increased transport costs, commodity prices have gone up in a number of markets.

The disruption of markets and transport has also affected cross-border trade. The closure of Nigeria’s Damassak market has choked off supply to Diffa, in neighbouring Niger. Border markets in Cameroon have also been closed due to insecurity.

Restricted transhumance

Conflict and insecurity have also restrained the seasonal herder migration around Lake Chad. Livestock health is expected to deteriorate as pasture and water points diminish with the dry season. Cattle deaths are likely to be higher than usual in the coming months and families depending on livestock for sustenance will incur losses that will impact income and access to food.

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The risk of livestock disease is also heightened as herds have been hemmed in certain areas unable to migrate as usual. This concentration may in turn trigger conflicts with farmers when the planting season begins.

Sahel food insecurity remains worrying

Good rainfall in the last season has slightly improved overall food security in the Sahel and West Africa region. The number of people facing crisis levels of food insecurity (Phase 3 - 5 of the Cadre Harmonisé) has been decreasing since 2014. However, a large number of people still require assistance.

Around 6.7 million people are already facing crisis levels of food and nutrition insecurity in the region, according to an April analysis by the Réseau de Prévention des Crises Alimentaires (RPCA), an inter-Governmental body monitoring food security in the Sahel and West Africa. The number is expected to rise to around 9.4 million unless appropriate measures are taken in time. Of those, eight million live in the Sahel.

High vulnerability in Lake Chad Basin

Nigeria, Chad and Niger alone account for three quarters of the population facing severe food insecurity, with particular concerns noted for communities in north-western Chad, where those facing crisis levels of food insecurity has more than doubled compared to the same period last year. As already mentioned, very high levels of vulnerability persist among communities in Niger and Nigeria affected by violence across the Lake Chad Basin. At the same time, in comparison to March 2015, the number of people affected by severe food insecurity has significantly decreased in Senegal and Mauritania.

Six million children acutely malnourished

Malnutrition remains a cause for concern, with an increase in levels of acute malnutrition - above the warning or emergency thresholds - in parts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Almost six million children under the age of five are at risk of acute malnutrition this year of whom a third faces the severe form and risk dying if measures are not taken.
Better harvests, markets generally stable

Following good harvests in the 2015 - 2016 season, food production has improved across the region, with the total cereal production estimated at 64 million tons, marking a 5 per cent increase over the previous year and a 13 per cent increase over the five-year average. However, where rainfall was poor, cereal production has fallen, particularly in Chad (-9 per cent), Mauritania (-8 per cent) and Burkina Faso (-7 per cent).

Food consumption is currently acceptable in most areas of the region, except in the conflict-hit areas of the Lake Chad Basin. Markets continue to function adequately, with prices of the main cereals generally stable in areas unaffected by the violence.

Immediate mitigation measures needed to prevent crises

Gathering in Paris on 13 - 15 April, 150 Government representatives from the Sahel and West Africa, together with development and humanitarian organizations, called for the immediate implementation of emergency livestock programmes to prevent crises in Chad and Niger; the setting up of integrated resilience-strengthening activities for communities affected by the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin; enhanced monitoring, prevention and treatment of malnutrition, with a particular focus on structural causes; and permanent monitoring of the regional market to detect early signs of malfunction.

Farmer-herder clashes displace over 6,000

Recent clashes between herders and farmers in Côte d’Ivoire’s north-eastern Bouna area have displaced more than 6,000 people, half of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Ghana. The violence first erupted in early February between Fulani - or Peulh - and Malinke herders on the one hand and farmers from the Lobi community on the other.

Ivorian forces have deployed in Bouna and efforts are ongoing to reconcile the rival sides. Humanitarian organizations are providing assistance to the 3,058 people who have settled in various sites in the area. Some 2,167 people have found refuge in Burkina Faso’s southern Batie town, while more than 700 others have fled to Ghana.

Herds and displacement

The displaced pastoralists have also brought along their cattle, risking farm encroachment in agricultural areas. In Burkina Faso, where those displaced are mostly nationals who had settled in Côte d’Ivoire, they have brought along around 8,000 heads of cattle and left behind more than 10,000.

On the other side of the Black Volta River in Bole, the Ghanaian local community refused to let the Fulani in the country with their cattle so the men stayed back with them while the women, children and the elderly crossed the river to Ghana.
Tension remains high

Although the violence has largely fizzled out and the situation has been brought under control, tension is still high in Bouna. Assessments of the affected populations across the three countries show their willingness to return home provided that their security will be guaranteed and that Lobi chiefs and youth be associated in the reconciliation meetings so that their return can be sustainable.

In Bouna, humanitarian organizations plan to continue delivering assistance to reduce vulnerabilities and save lives by supporting the efforts of the authorities until conditions are met to enable the return of the displaced.

Recurrent conflict

Farmer-herder conflicts are not uncommon in the region. The violence in Bouna is the latest illustration of the complex cohabitation between the Fulani and other ethnicities of West and Central Africa.

Beyond the struggle over resources, ethnic and religious differences as well as environmental degradation and climate change are drivers of the recurring conflicts. For instance, Nigeria has seen a resurgence of inter-communal violence between Fulani and farmers over the last few years. Most virulent in north central and north eastern Nigeria as well as inland of the Niger delta, the violence has affected five of the country’s 36 states, with over 489 attacks between 1997 and 2016, causing at least 4,000 casualties over the last six years.

Economic costs

In addition to the costs incurred in terms of human lives, the Fulani-herders conflict has both humanitarian and economic consequences. According to global humanitarian aid agency Mercy Corps, Nigeria could gain up to US$13 billion annually in total.

1 http://www.acleddata.com
macroeconomic progress in a scenario of peace between farmers and pastoralists in four of Nigeria’s five conflict-affected states alone\(^2\).

Existing coping strategies of communities experiencing farmer-herders conflict can negatively impact both short and long-term growth. Pastoralists tend to adapt by modifying their patterns of movement, which can reduce their ability to earn a living, moving through grazing routes more quickly to avoid conflict, adversely affecting animal health and contributing to an increased number of food insecure or malnourished people. The violence is also forcing the population to flee their homes: in February 2016 alone, the incidents between Fulani herders and farmers caused the displacement of 7,000 persons in Nigeria’s east central Benue state\(^3\).

### Ebola update

**Flare-ups test epidemic surveillance**

Despite the declaration of end of epidemics in high risk countries, Guinea and Liberia saw new cases of the virus. Guinea confirmed a new Ebola case on 17 March as it was about to complete a 90-day surveillance phase after transmissions had been declared over. The new case was a woman from the southern Nzérékoré Prefecture. However, it is likely that three people who had died three weeks earlier, including the woman’s husband, also succumbed to Ebola. This raises questions about the surveillance system, particularly at the community level, and highlights the continuing reticence to report suspected cases by individuals and communities.

**Rapid response and case management**

Following the flare-up, rapid response and case management teams swiftly reactivated emergency protocols and measures. The Ebola treatment centre in Nzérékoré was up and running again in less than 24 hours. Case investigation and contact tracing teams were deployed to the epicentre of the outbreak. A mobile radio station was also relocated to Koropara area in Nzérékoré in a few days to broadcast prevention messages.

**First case in Liberia since January**

These measures nonetheless did not prevent the outbreak from being exported to Liberia. Despite a temporary border closure on the Liberian side, a woman managed to travel to Monrovia under a false Liberian name and died in hospital on 31 March, becoming Liberia’s first Ebola case since the virus was declared over in January. She also brought along her two sons who tested positive and have been undergoing treatment.

**Countries remain on high alert**

As of 19 April, seven confirmed cases had been reported in Guinea and three in Liberia. Over 1,200 people have been vaccinated in Guinea and more than 1,400 contacts have been monitored in both countries. It is hoped that the chain of transmission has been stopped, with the last confirmed case reported on 6 April in Guinea’s Macenta Prefecture.

\(^2\) [https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/economic-costs-conflict-nigeria](https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/economic-costs-conflict-nigeria)

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reiterated that more flare-ups are expected in the months to come largely due to virus persistence in some survivors, and that the three countries must remain on high alert and ready to respond.

**Strengthening disaster management in Guinea**

As Guinea is recovering from the deadly Ebola outbreak, the Government and partners took stock of some good disaster management practices implemented during the outbreak.

From 7 to 18 March, over 12 UN agencies and other partner organisations completed a joint assessment on national capacities for disaster risk management and emergency response preparedness, under the facilitation of OCHA and UNDP regional offices. The teams visited more than 80 national or regional institutions in Conakry and in three selected locations representing a sample of the diversity of climatic and eco-systems in Guinea (Nzérékoré, Kankan and Mamou). The assessment was also supported by experts from the European Union Civil Protection mechanism and the UNDAC network.

Preliminary findings show encouraging initiatives to strengthen disaster management at the local level but also significant institutional, coordination and operational challenges. A technical session with over 50 Government officials and partners including EU/ECHO and OFDA validated the report on 26 April. A high level political validation of the key recommendations and of a national programme to strengthen capacities in resilience, risk reduction and disaster management is due to take place mid-June.

**Regional update on epidemics**

The West African region continues to face numerous public health challenges including recurrent epidemics such as cholera, meningitis, Lassa fever and measles.

**Meningitis outbreak**

From January to March 2016, 7,896 suspected cases of meningitis, including 639 deaths have been recorded. Thirty-seven districts in Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Togo have reached the epidemic threshold, while 74 districts in eight of the countries have hit the alert level.

In Ghana, mass meningitis vaccination campaign was conducted in the three districts of Jirapa, Nadowli and Nandom in the Upper West region in March, with 136,000 people aged 2 to 29 vaccinated, representing 98.6 per cent of the target population. In Togo, two rounds of vaccination in different districts have been conducted. A total of 436,683 people from 2 to 29 years, representing 98 per cent of the target population, were immunized. A third round is underway in other districts.

**Lassa fever outbreak**

Benin, Togo and Nigeria are facing Lassa fever outbreaks. As of 10 April, 309 cases and 174 deaths were reported. Lassa fever is endemic in Nigeria, currently the most affected country with 254 cases. The disease has considerably decreased in Nigeria and in Togo, while in Benin the outbreak has so far been reported in 21 townships in eight of the country’s 12 regions, and is still spreading into new townships. Health authorities are reporting challenges in the implementation of infection prevention and control activities at community level.

**Cholera outbreak**

Between January and 3 April, 6,030 cholera cases including 96 deaths were reported in Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Nigeria. Ninety per cent of the cases are from the DRC with 5,757 cases and 94 deaths. Cholera cases are higher this year compared to the same period in 2015, but remain low compared to 2013 and 2014.
Humanitarian news in brief

Flooding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

DRC has been particularly impacted by above average rains from October 2015 to March 2016 along the Congo River Basin, in Haut Uélé and South Kivu provinces. Experts consider this could be an indirect impact of El Niño. The rains and subsequent flooding have caused the destruction of thousands of homes, vital food stocks and crops, and public infrastructure with an estimated 550,000 people affected as of early March. OCHA and partners have validated a response plan to floods in the affected provinces.

Political unrest in the Congo

The re-election of President Denis Sassou Nguesso for a fifth term took place on 20 March 2016 in a tense political environment. His main opponents claimed that the elections were unfair and lacked transparency. The European Union and the International Organisation of the Francophonie did not send observers on the ground, saying they had doubts over the electoral process. Sassou Nguesso was declared the winner with over 60 per cent of the votes during the first round. Heavy gunfire rocked Brazzaville following the result of the election, displacing an estimated 17,000 people. The situation in the capital returned to normal although access to the Southern Pool region where military operations are reported is still restricted by the Government.

Sahel Funding Status Overview

2016 Sahel Appeal funded at 12 per cent

As of 29 April, the US$1.983 billion Sahel Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) had received $243 million, representing 12 per cent of the year’s requirements. In addition, funding to humanitarian activities recorded outside the Response Plan was at $117 million, bringing the total funding to 18 per cent. The top three donors are the European Union, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Japan.

To date, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Mali are the best funded appeals, while Chad, Gambia and Mauritania are the least funded. The most funded sectors are Nutrition, Logistics, and Shelter & Non-Food Items. Food security, Protection, Early recovery, Health and Multisector are the least funded sectors so far.