REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **Three aid workers killed** in armed attack in north-east Nigeria
- Over 100 GBV cases reported in Chad’s Lac region in January
- Around 8,000 Cameroonianians newly displaced in Mayo-Tsanaga
- Malnutrition on the rise in Niger’s Diffa region
- **US$1.6 billion needed to assist 7.8 million people**
- UN Deputy Emergency Response Coordinator visits Cameroon and Chad
- Voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon to start

10.7M people in need
7.8M targeted for assistance
2.3M people displaced
5.8M food insecure people at crisis and emergency level
488k children suffering from severe acute malnutrition
1.6B funding requirement in 2018
**SITUATION OVERVIEW**

**DISRUPTIVE ARMED ATTACKS**

The recent months have been marked by dramatic incidents of insecurity. Armed raiders on 19 February abducted 110 school girls in Dapchi locality in Nigeria’s north-eastern Yobe state. The incident happened nearly four years after the kidnapping of over 270 girls from their school in Chibok area in Borno state. The authorities said most of the girls were freed on 21 March. The Government had previously announced that it preferred to negotiate their release. Attacks and insecurity remain prevalent in north-east Nigeria and the Far North region of Cameroon.

On 1 March, an attack on the town of Rann in Borno, near the border with Cameroon, claimed the lives of three aid workers. Three others were abducted and another injured. As security assessments are being carried out, a temporary relocation of the aid workers stationed in Rann was decided. The town is home to around 80,000 people, including 55,000 internally displaced persons who are mostly dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival. Attacks on camps for displaced, villages and towns are recurrent, causing death and injury to civilians and continuous population displacements.

In Cameroon’s Far North region, around 30 attacks were recorded in January alone in which around 20 people were killed, homes destroyed, livestock and property looted. Military operations have triggered displacements and restricted humanitarian assistance. Some 8,000 Cameroonians fled their homes in Mayo Tsanaga due to recent military operations and armed incursions. Since January, around 2,000 Nigerian asylum seekers relocated to Minawao camp, the main refugee settlement in Far North region. Part of them fled military counter-offensives in Nigeria’s Sambisa Forest area into Cameroon while a majority were out of camp refugees who decided to join the camp due to robberies and attacks in the villages they had settled in.

**PERSISTENT FOOD INSECURITY**

Protracted violence, population displacements and disrupted livelihoods have contributed to high levels of hunger across the conflict-hit Lake Chad Basin region. Some 5.8 million are currently food insecure. Increased humanitarian assistance and favourable harvest in certain areas have helped ease food insecurity.

However, most poor households and displaced people remain highly dependent on food assistance to survive. Staple food prices are mostly well above average, making food access even more difficult for households with few income-earning opportunities. In areas in Nigeria’s north-east which are hard to reach for humanitarian organisations, there is an elevated risk of famine, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) warned on 2 March. However, it pointed out that there is insufficient evidence to make a formal determination on famine.

**PROTECTION**

Protracted violence continues to subject civilians, including IDPs, refugees and host communities to grave protection risks and violations. In Chad, 106 cases of gender-based violence were reported in January in the western Lac region, mostly physical assaults (33 per cent) and resource deprivation (27 per cent). All victims received psychosocial support, but very few received medical and legal assistance. In 2017, 2,270 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported. Comprehensive care for survivors is a persisting challenge. In 2018, the main challenge is access to justice for GBV survivors due to impunity, weak legal systems and cultural barriers. Access to health care services is also extremely limited and the number of mobile clinics has fallen due to lack of funding.
Humanitarian organisations and Governments have in 2018 requested for **US$1.6 billion to assist 7.8 million people** affected by the conflict across the Lake Chad Basin. Humanitarian needs remain high as the conflict continues to cause adversity. Some **488,000 children** are severely acutely malnourished and **5.8 million people** are struggling with high levels of food insecurity. The protracted conflict has left around 2.3 million people displaced in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Relief operations have been ramped up since 2016, with more people receiving assistance. However, insecurity still undermines access to certain localities, depriving affected communities of assistance. In 2017, donors provided 62 per cent of the $1.5 billion humanitarian response budget. Humanitarian response strategies this year are further strengthening collaboration with Governments and development actors to provide urgent relief assistance and address the causes of recurrent emergencies.

From 20 - 27 February, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller, visited Cameroon and Chad to witness the human suffering caused by the prolonged conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. She noted the increased need in humanitarian assistance and protection in Cameroon’s Far North and called on the international community and Governments to support humanitarian actors in stepping up operations. In Chad, she noted that **funding for humanitarian operations has not kept pace with increased needs**, especially in regions affected by displacement and food insecurity in the country’s south and east, and called for lasting solutions to the crisis in the Lac region.

**REQUIREMENT PER COUNTRY (IN US$)**

- **Nigeria**: 1,058,119,000
- **Cameroon**: 189,119,000
- **Chad**: 179,419,000
- **Niger**: 162,119,000

**TOTAL REQUIREMENT FOR 2018**

**US$ 1.6 BILLION**
OPERATIONAL UPDATES BY COUNTRY

CAMEROON

- In January, around 8,000 Cameroonianians were forced to flee and seek safety in host communities and IDP sites in Mayo-Tsanaga department in Far North region following recurrent attacks and military operations in Mandara mountains on the border with Nigeria. Worsening insecurity has also complicated humanitarian access and delayed several needs assessment missions in the region.

- On 25 January, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Cameroon and the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization launched the country’s 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, which seeks $304.5 million to reach 1.3 million of the people in need. In total, some 3.3 million people need emergency assistance in the affected regions of Adamaoua, East, North and Far North, representing a 14 per cent increase compared to last year. With 2.1 million people in need, Far North region accounts for 64 per cent of the humanitarian needs in the country.

- From 22 to 26 February, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller, visited Cameroon and called on the international community and the Government to step up support for humanitarian action in the country. Mueller, who travelled to the conflict-hit Far North region, noted that lack of funding was the biggest impediment to humanitarian operations, which are also hampered by insecurity. Humanitarian funding has slumped since 2016 when the budget received 69 per cent of funds. In 2017, only 48 per cent of the revised budget was funded - below the average global funding level of 58 per cent. Protection concerns, including on SGBV, were also raised during the mission and need to be urgently addressed.

- Findings from a multi-sectorial needs assessment conducted in Mayo-Sava in October 2017 indicate that the department is the second most affected by the conflict with Boko Haram, in terms of the number of people displaced (73,500) and reported security incidents (183 in 2017). Some 281,000 people are in need (57 per cent of the total population), majority of whom are children. Food remains the most unmet need in Kolofata area. Seventy-six per cent also reported not having enough information about assistance provided in camps.

- Despite a significant slowdown in forced returns of Nigerian refugees from Cameroon, maintaining access to asylum continues to be challenging. On 18 February, 47 Nigerians were reported to have been sent back to Banki in Nigeria.

- The humanitarian country team is developing a $10 million proposal to be allocated through the CERF Underfunded Emergencies window. The allocation will support the needs of 835,000 people (IDPs, refugees and returnees) in Far North (Mayo Sava, Mayo Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari departments). The funds will support protection, health, food security and WASH assistance, including through cash-based programming.

Cameroon’s Far North region has suffered recurrent armed raids. Insecurity and attacks continue to displace thousands of people. Food insecurity and malnutrition have deepened. Around 1.5 million people in the Far North region are food insecure. Almost half of all children affected by acute malnutrition in Cameroon are in Far North. Population displacement has risen in 2017 to reach around 310,000. The region is currently home to around 89,000 Nigerian refugees, more than half of whom are living in Minawao camp. Precarious conditions in the camp, reduction of food rations and refugees being swayed to believe that conditions are back to normal in their areas of origin have contributed to the spontaneous return of almost 13,000 refugees between April and June 2017.
Incidents of insecurity against aid workers, military operations, security restriction, interference or attempted interference in aid work are some of the major humanitarian access constraints, according to the October - December 2017 survey on aid organisations. Physical access constraints such as rising Lake Chad waters and administrative hurdles such as short-term visas and travel permits are the other impediments.

In 2017, 106 security incidents against humanitarian personnel, infrastructure or assets were documented throughout the country, including robberies/armed robberies (sometimes combined with kidnappings), threats and physical assaults, resulting in intimidation, injuries to humanitarian personnel, and damage to humanitarian goods. Recent positive developments regarding humanitarian access include improved dialogue with the authorities regarding administrative constraints, as well as a workshop on administrative constraints held on 1 February to define a joint roadmap.

In January, 106 cases of gender-based violence were reported in the western Lac region, mostly physical assaults (33 per cent) and resource deprivation (27 per cent). All victims who sought out help received psychosocial support, but very few received medical and legal assistance. In 2017, 2,270 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported. Comprehensive care for victims is a persisting challenge. In 2018, the main challenge is access to justice for victims of GBV. Impunity, weak legal system and cultural barriers hamper justice to victims. Access to healthcare services is also extremely limited and the number of mobile clinics has fallen due to lack of funding.

On 9 February, the humanitarian community and the Government launched the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan. In Chad, 4.4 million people, or nearly one in three people, need humanitarian assistance in 2018. Among them, the humanitarian community has targeted the 1.9 million most vulnerable people and calls for mobilization of $544 million to save and protect their lives and strengthen their resilience. Among these needs, $179 million (a third of the total financial requirements) are required to assist 353,000 people in the Lac region.

Deputy Emergency Coordinator, Ursula Mueller, visited Chad on 25 - 27 February and travelled to Lac region to witness the humanitarian consequences of the Lake Chad Basin crisis. She met with the Governor, affected populations (both host and displaced communities), and humanitarian and development partners. Affected populations insisted on the need for lasting solutions and livelihoods-strengthening activities to become self-sufficient. Mueller also met with Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacké and discussed ways of engaging donors to provide more funding to meet humanitarian needs and development actors for long-term solutions.

In 2017, in the Lac region, 22,160 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition were treated and 155,600 people benefited from food assistance (food distributions and cash transfers). Almost 310 boreholes were built to provide access to drinking water to 123,000 people. UNICEF and partners provided learning materials to 70,000 children and access to education to 18,400 children; psychosocial support for a total of 6,000 displaced children; identification, tracing and reunification for 333 unaccompanied and separated children.

Thousands of families have been uprooted in localities around the western Lac region by insecurity and cross-border attacks. The region currently hosts around 135,000 people struggling to survive under difficult conditions with little access to necessities such as potable water, health, nutrition and education. Children associated with armed groups, unaccompanied or separated from their families, are particularly vulnerable, as are displaced women and girls who account for more than 80 per cent of victims of gender-based violence reported so far in 2017. Incidents related to the protection of civilians, one third of which involve men in uniform, have increased worryingly since April 2017. The local population has come under pressure of the influx in a region already beset by poverty and underdevelopment.
• Global acute malnutrition rate in Diffa has reached 13.9 per cent, compared to 11.4 per cent in October 2016, according to the December 2017 SMART survey. The study also showed that 2.5 per cent of children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, more than twice the rate in 2016 (1 per cent). Less than one in 10 children in the region receive the recommended minimum food intake. In N’Guigmi IDP sites and Sayam Forage refugee camp, the nutritional status of children has improved due relief efforts and improving security that has allowed the resumption of economic and livelihood activities. Children in IDP sites and Sayam Forage refugee camp have better access to food in general.

• Cereal prices have risen this year by 30 per cent compared to 2017 owing to a decline in the importation of millet, sorghum and maize from Nigeria and the volatility of the naira, Nigeria’s currency.

• In cooperation with ACTED, UNICEF has launched a multi-village water supply network in Kindjandi area of Diffa. The joint effort is planned to replace the water-trucking service which has been serving over 17,000 people - local communities and displaced people in Kindjandi since July 2016. The first phase of the project is expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2018 and will serve 15,000 people, while the last phase is scheduled to be finalized by the end of the second quarter for the remaining people.

• On 8 March, Niger’s Government announced the extension of the state of emergency in the Diffa region for a period of three months. Diffa has suffered recurrent attacks by Boko Haram and the state of emergency has been in place since February 2015.

• On 7 February, armed elements raided Gagam village in the east of Diffa town and looted supplies in the local health centre. They also destroyed three classrooms at a local school and pillaged the school canteen. Several attacks and lootings of public infrastructure were reported in 2017. Since the start of 2018, most of their attacks have been marked by killings, abductions and attacks on security forces.

• In 2017, 60 people were killed, 70 abducted and 11 wounded by armed assailants. Diffa department in the south-eastern Diffa region suffered around 60 per cent of the attacks. This marks a decline compared to between 2015 and 2016 when around 20 civilians were either killed, injured or abducted every month. The figure dropped to an average of 12 per month.

The south-eastern Diffa region is witnessing an unprecedented humanitarian emergency since the first armed attacks in February 2015. Hundreds of thousands of people have been internally displaced or forced to seek refuge in the region from across the border. By September 2016, around 200 families had arrived in Diffa in search of safety from attacks in Nigeria and Chad. Diffa is home to just four per cent of Niger’s population. However, it accounts for almost 20 per cent of the 2.2 million people in need of protection and life-saving assistance in the country. Across the country, 1.8 million people are struggling to meet their most basic need for food, some 500,000 more than at the beginning of the year. Around 400,000 children under five are at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition.
Three aid workers were killed and another wounded by armed attackers in Rann town in Borno state on 1 March. Three paramedical workers were also abducted. UN Humanitarian Coordinator Edward Kallon condemned the attack. Two of the deceased worked with the International Organization for Migration. The other was a medical doctor working for UNICEF. Around 80,000 people, including 55,000 internally displaced persons, currently reside in Rann and are dependent on humanitarian assistance.

On 8 February, the humanitarian community and the Government jointly launched the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for north-east Nigeria, which appeals for $1.05 billion. Some 7.7 million people need humanitarian assistance across the worst-affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. This includes 3.7 million people who are expected to be severely food insecure during the lean season starting in June. Aid organisations plan to assist 6.1 million people. In 2017, over 5 million people received life-saving assistance. Donors provided $746 million (71 per cent) of the $1.05 billion appeal.

On 19 February, armed raiders abducted 110 schoolgirls in Dapchi, about 100 km from the capital of Yobe State, Damaturu. This is the largest kidnappings since the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014. Most of them were freed on 21 March and taken back to their village. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, condemned the abduction. The Government had deployed extra troops and planes to search for the missing schoolgirls.

The first phase of the voluntary repatriation of 4,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon (mostly from Madagali, Michika, Mubi North and South, Hong and Gombi LGAs of Adamawa State) is to start in March. An estimated 90,000 Nigerian refugees remain in Cameroon. The targeted group for voluntary return accounts for around five per cent of the Nigerian refugees in Cameroon. The others originate from Borno State, most of which is not yet conducive to safe and dignified returns. Humanitarians have also expressed concerns over security in Madagali and Michika LGAs where the situation remains fluid with incidents of person-borne explosive device attacks targeting civilians. Two transit centres have been established at the Sahuda border and Mubi where refugees will be screened and later transported to their communities. Partners are also prepositioning return packages to support the refugees, while the Government has committed to a six-month health insurance coverage for all returning refugees.

On 6 March, fire destroyed more than 200 IDP shelters in Mafa camp in Nigeria’s northeast. The blaze spread from a firewood stove and destroyed food and household items belonging to around 1,000 IDPs. The razed shelters were among 500 recently constructed homes by UNHCR. Efforts are underway to provide immediate support to affected households. Since the onset of the dry season, partners have scaled up sensitisation programmes to reduce the risk of fire outbreaks in camps and host communities.

Nigeria’s north-eastern region has been ravaged by violence for nearly a decade. What started as a protection crisis has also become a major food and nutrition crisis, and one of the largest humanitarian emergencies in the world. Agricultural production has nearly stalled. Protracted displacement has further devastated livelihoods already upended by violence. Humanitarian response has been escalated over the past year. Food assistance is now reaching around 2 million people. Aid agencies have significantly increased personnel and resources to meet the huge humanitarian needs. Despite the progress, insecurity and funding shortfall are major hurdles to providing adequate assistance. Many areas remain inaccessible and armed attacks continue to torment civilians and pose threats.