LAKE CHAD BASIN: CRISIS UPDATE

No. 24
May - June 2018

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- New displacements on the rise as conflict persists
- Several new attacks in Nigeria and Cameroon
- First joint mission in 2018 conducted in Bosso
- Modalities agreed to ease return of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon
- Food insecurity remains high, expected to persist in 2019

10.7M people in need
7.8M targeted for assistance
2.4M people displaced
5.0M food insecure people at crisis and emergency level
490k children suffering from severe acute malnutrition
1.6B funding requirement in 2018

Credit: OCHA/Yasmina Guerda
SITUATION OVERVIEW

CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

Over the past two months, thousands of civilians have been freshly displaced and relief operations disrupted as armed attacks persist, particularly in north-east Nigeria and Far North region of Cameroon. In north-east Nigeria alone, around 2,600 people were freshly displaced in late June. In all, more than 100,000 have been newly displaced in Nigeria’s north-east since October 2017 owing to persistent insecurity, attacks, military operations and poor living conditions. In June, bomb attacks in Diffa in the south-east of Niger and in Cameroon’s Far North region forced aid groups to suspend operations. In Cameroon, the attack occurred in a locality hosting displaced people.

Displacements often separate families and accentuate suffering as access to food, water, healthcare and other basic needs diminishes. Those newly forced to flee their homes usually find refuge in other villages, towns or in existing displacement sites where the residents also endure difficult living conditions. Where security has improved, thousands of people have returned. However, they struggle to restart their lives having lost much of their property. Humanitarian organizations continue to call for support so that their return can be sustainable.

CIVILIAN PROTECTION

The protracted crisis has exposed civilians to frequent rights violation and abuse. In Chad’s western Lac region, aid actors recorded 323 incidents of rights violations between January and April 2018. They included violations of the right to life, property, freedom, physical integrity and gender-based and sexual violence. Armed gangs are blamed for the violations. The military has also been accused of rights abuses. In a move welcomed by UNICEF on 9 July, the Nigerian military released 183 children aged 7 – 18 who had been detained on suspicion of belonging to an armed group.

Since 2017, UNICEF has supported the social and economic reintegration of more than 8,700 children released from armed groups, helping trace their families, returning them to their communities, and offering them psychosocial support, education, vocational training and informal apprenticeships, and opportunities to improve livelihoods.

In Cameroon, the Technical Working Group on voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon agreed in June to facilitate registration, transportation and information provision to ensure safe and dignified return of civilians forced from their homes by violence. Incidents of refoulement continue to be reported despite an agreement on voluntary refugee returns. UNHCR has repeatedly condemned the incidents and called for the respect of human rights and humanitarian law.

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity remains high across the conflict-hit region. Some 5 million people are food insecure. Displaced communities in Cameroon depend on markets for food, have been forced to cut the number of meals and changed eating habits to cope with scarcity, analysis by Famine Early Warning System Networks (FEWSNET) showed. Parts of Chad and Niger have been hit by drought that has affected four other Sahel countries following poor rains in the 2017 season. Due to an early onset of the lean season, affected families depend on markets for food, whose prices have increased. Household economies and food stocks have been depressed.

The conflict has deprived many families of livelihood as they cannot farm, fish or trade. In Niger’s Diffa region, FEWSNET project that food insecurity at crisis level is likely to persist until January 2019. In north-eastern Nigeria, most of the violence-affected populations depend on humanitarian assistance for survival. Those cut off from assistance face the elevated emergency phase of food insecurity.
On 8 June, UN Humanitarian Coordinators from the four Lake Chad Basin countries briefed UN Member States in Geneva on the humanitarian emergency and operations in the region. The UN officials stressed that the scale of the humanitarian emergency remains huge despite military efforts to combat armed groups and called for increased international support. Greater effort is critical to expanding aid operations. In 2017, more than 6 million people received life-saving assistance across the area and a massively scaled-up aid delivery helped avert famine in north-east Nigeria. More still needs to be done. They also underscored the need to increase early recovery and development assistance, noting that humanitarian funding and response will not be enough to address this crisis. Humanitarian response is increasingly being linked up to development action in the Lake Chad Basin to build resilience and facilitate early and longer-term recovery.

On 25 May, the UN, through the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund, allocated US$2 million to enable aid organisations to curb a deadly cholera outbreak in Yobe in north-east Nigeria. The funds were to provide safe water to over 1.6 million people, improve sanitation for thousands in the affected communities, and boost the technical and human resource capacity in hotspot areas.

### Funding Level per Country

- **Nigeria**
  - Required: 1.05B
  - Funded: 502.8M

- **Cameroon**
  - Required: 189.2M
  - Funded: 16.4M

- **Chad**
  - Required: 179.4M
  - Funded: 41.0M

- **Niger**
  - Required: 167.9M
  - Funded: 38.9M

**Funded**

- **US$ 603.8M**

**Requirement**

- **US$ 1.6 BILLION**

Source: Financial Tracking System (FTS) as of 25/07/2018
In June, the Far North region witnessed a resurgence in suicide attacks. On 20 June, a double-suicide attack killed six civilians in Kolofata in Mayo-Sava department near the Nigerian border. A similar attack occurred on 16 June in the same department and killed a young girl. These were the first suicide attacks in the Far North since March 2018. In response to increased incursions of armed elements in the areas bordering Nigeria, security authorities have ordered reinforcements, including systematic check of administrative and security vehicles across the country. As a result, several humanitarian vehicles have been searched, delaying operations. OCHA continues to advocate with national authorities to safeguard the space for principled humanitarian action.

The Technical Working Group on the voluntary repatriation on Nigerian refugees in Cameroon held its second session on 27 – 29 June in Cameroon. The group agreed that Nigeria will fast track decisions on the mode of transportation for repatriation, Cameroon will facilitate the establishment of registration points for out-of-camp refugees and Nigeria propose a date for the start of the repatriation. They also agreed that Nigeria will share information on security and access to basic services in the return areas and UNHCR will launch information campaigns and registrations from July in Minawao camp for those willing to return and that it proceed with the biometric registration of out-of-camp refugees in the Far North region to facilitate future returns.

In preparation for the voluntary repatriation, more than 700 refugees have registered for the exercise. All of them are originally from Nigeria’s north-eastern Adamawa state.

In June, over 100 people, including 42 Nigerian refugees and 64 women and children formerly associated with armed groups were reportedly returned to Nigeria in deplorable conditions aboard two private trucks. Discussions are ongoing with the administrative authorities of Logone-et-Chari department over the matter.

The number of displaced people returning home has risen by 20 per cent between December 2017 and April 2018 to stand at 83,140, according to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix released in April. Ninety per cent of returnees were former IDPs and the rest were former refugees returning from neighbouring countries. The highest increase was observed in the departments of Mayo-Sava, Logone-et-Chari and Mayo-Tsanaga in Far North region.

Military operations have been intensified in Far North region and are to last until August. This is likely to affect the provision of military escorts for UN agencies. Several UN missions planned in May were not conducted.
A total of 323 protection incidents were reported across 85 IDP sites in the Lac region from January to April 2018, the protection monitoring mechanism showed. The shrinking of humanitarian space since March may explain a decrease in protection incidents from 75 cases in March to 73 in April compared to 109 in February. The incidents include violations of the right to property, right to life, liberty and physical integrity as well as gender-based sexual violence and violations. Men account for 59 per cent of the victims and women the rest. The alleged perpetrators of incidents are mostly small units of armed groups committing criminal attacks. The most affected localities are border areas with Niger and Nigeria including Kaiga Kindjiria, Tchoukoutalia and Ngouboua. Defence and security forces and the displaced themselves are also cited to be among the perpetrators.

Some 398 children released from prison were receive at a transit centre in Bol in Lac region. To improve the assistance provided to these children, 56 facilitators and 168 transitional host families were trained on the importance of recreational activities in restoring children's social balance. In Fouli, Kaya and Mamdi departments with 28 sites in total, a network of six host families was created for the placement of the unaccompanied and separated children and children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

Uneven distribution and an early end of rainfall last season has depleted pasture and degraded livestock health in several pastoral areas of the country, according to FAO. A high concentration of livestock has been observed in several areas, including the Lac region. In these areas, pastoralists are highly vulnerable due to scarce pasture and poor livestock prices. The situation is unlikely to improve until the end of July.

Thousands of families have been uprooted in localities around the western Lac region by insecurity and cross-border attacks. The region currently hosts around 138,000 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.
• OCHA facilitated a joint intersectoral mission on 24 May in Bosso, the first in 2018. Bosso is one of the departments most affected by insecurity. A series of attacks in 2016 emptied the entire town and badly disrupted public services (water and power supply, communication, clinics, markets etc.). Military presence has led to some returns, however limited access by humanitarian actors has left many increasingly vulnerable. According to an October 2017 civil authority census, the town is now home to 5,000 households of whom 1,066 are IDPs and refugees. Priority needs include water, shelter, basic household items and food. Insecurity has hampered farming and increased the vulnerability of the host population and the displaced who do not have access to land.

• On 4 June, at least six civilians were killed and 36 injured in three separate suicide blasts in Diffa town. The number of attacks has been declining since the beginning of a military operation by the Multinational Joint Task Force in April.

• Nigerian refugees are preparing to return home following a request by the Nigerian Government. Several villages could benefit from the deployment of military contingents to secure communities. There are already reports of return in Kainoua village near the border while “go-and-see” visits are taking place in Assaga village.

• Heavy rains and strong winds from 16 - 24 June affected more than 4,000 people in Kablewa, N’Guigmi, Nguelbelly and Fulatari localities in Diffa. The humanitarian community estimates that 170,000 people could be affected by floods this year in Niger.

• From 1 January - 12 June, there were 192 cases of hepatitis E in Diffa region, and no death. Of the 192 cases, 105 cases were in Chetimari, 31 cases in Assaga and 12 cases in Sayam Forage refugee camp.

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. Diffa is home to just four per cent of Niger’s population. However, it accounts for 18 per cent of the 2.3 million people in need of protection and life-saving assistance in the country. Across the country, 1.4 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.
Population displacement remains complex. The number of displaced people in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states increased by almost 37,000 compared to April 2018 due to continued military operations, according to IOM’s June Displacement Tracking Matrix. In May alone, over 21,000 people arrived in various locations across the three states. Many came with nothing and in poor condition with health problems and numerous cases of malnutrition. The number of people who returned from refugee areas near their homes increased by 108,000. Around 1.5 million people have already returned closer to their areas of origin since August 2015.

Military operations will continue to trigger new displacement. Some 115,000 people are expected to be displaced from hard-to-reach areas in Borno. The humanitarian community has developed a contingency plan to assess response capacities and gaps in key locations that will likely see high levels of displacement. The plan seeks US$41.7 million to ensure sufficient preparedness and response activities.

Planning for the rainy season has been completed, and the likely scenario is that over 436,000 individuals in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states will be affected between June and September. Each year, impassable roads impede and delay distribution of relief items while IDP camps are often flooded, damaging shelters, education and health facilities, adding to the risk of water-borne diseases. To address the needs, partners are appealing for $33.6 million to assist those who are estimated to be most affected during the rainy season.

More than 100,000 children in north-east Nigeria are cut off from polio vaccination due to ongoing hostilities that have prevented vaccination teams from reaching many areas, the Health Ministry said on 18 June. Around 30 per cent of communities in Borno state has not been covered by the vaccination teams. Polio re-erupted in Nigeria in 2016 after two years, prompting a series of emergency vaccination drives in the region and in neighbouring countries.