Niger struggles with cyclic and protracted events that devastate the lives of millions of people. Conflict, adverse climate, poverty and underdevelopment cause huge population displacements, drive up hunger and malnutrition, and deprive communities of basic services and opportunities for a better future. This year, 2.3 million people need humanitarian assistance to survive – an increase of 400,000 people compared to 2017. Humanitarian needs have deepened in nearly all the sectors and all of Niger’s eight regions are grappling with humanitarian emergencies at varying scales. Humanitarian actors are striving to provide life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable communities. However, curbing the persistent human suffering requires more than just humanitarian response. All actors – Government, development and humanitarian – need to work together to address the drivers of vulnerability and uplift communities from the cycle of adversity. Efforts are underway to create conditions for people to become self-reliant and better prepared for future shocks.
THE CRISIS AT A GLANCE

🔥 FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION

Some 1.4 million people need food assistance and 1.7 million need urgent nutrition support, including 380,000 severely malnourished children under five. In the south-eastern conflict-hit Diffa region, global acute malnutrition rates have reached 14 per cent, above the 10 per cent alert threshold. Conflict and insecurity have heightened food insecurity in Diffa, and in Tahoua and Tillaberi in the west. Recurrent armed attacks in Diffa over the past three years and subsequent security restrictions have constrained farming, fishing trade and other movements. In a desperate search for food, more than 1,200 people have taken the risk to return to Lake Chad islands despite a ban by the military. The state of emergency in Tillaberi and Tahoua due to attacks and insecurity has also considerably curtailed movement. Sixteen markets have been closed, reducing food access.

⚠️ DISPLACEMENT

Conflict and persistent insecurity around the Lake Chad Basin have uprooted more than 252,000 people in Diffa region. They include over 108,000 Nigerian refugees, 129,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 15,000 Niger nationals who returned from Nigeria.

# OF DISPLACED PERSONS IN DIFFA

Security is also deteriorating in the northern areas of Tillaberi and Tahoua regions. Intercommunity violence and cross-border raids by Mali-based non-state armed groups have forced more than 17,000 civilians from their homes since the start of 2018. The violence has claimed hundreds of lives. Some of the armed elements have imposed illegal tax collection regimes and forcefully evicted communities from their villages. Niger’s conflict-affected western region also hosts some 57,000 Malians who fled the 2012 crisis.

Recent migration flows towards Algeria and Libya continue to slow down. During the first quarter of 2018, 12,642 outgoing migrants and 11,449 incoming migrants were registered by IOM along the migration routes in Niger. In the same period in 2017, there were 17,634 outgoing migrants and 44,079 incoming migrants.

However, IOM warns that restrictive measures taken by the Niger Government against irregular migration have led to a shift in migrant routes to Algeria and Libya. They include routes through Chad and along the border with Mali.

On the other hand, migrants from third countries are regularly abandoned on the Algerian border and forced to walk in the desert to reach Assamaka, the first point of entry into Niger. In 2018, IOM organized 18 search and rescue operations to assist 3,000 stranded people.
**PROTECTION**

When they lose their homes to violence or migrate for economic reasons, many people, particularly women and children, become extremely vulnerable to human rights violations. In Diffa and Tillaberi, 370,000 children, of whom 50 per cent are girls, need protection against sexual violence, forced enrollment by armed groups, family separation and psychological despair.

**FLOODS**

While floods have become increasingly recurrent, climate change makes it harder and harder to anticipate flooding scenarios. In 2017, more than 200,000 people were affected by torrential rains and flooding by Niger river, double the initial planning figures. The death of 16,000 animals and the destruction of 10,000 hectares of cropland is weighing heavily on the 2018 pastoral and agricultural prospects. It is estimated that 170,000 people will be affected by flood during the rainy season between June and September.

**EPIDEMICS**

Poor living and sanitation conditions combined with promiscuity in areas of displacement constitute a fertile ground for the spread of disease such as meningitis, measles, cholera and hepatitis E. Niger is part of the "African meningitis belt" that extends from Senegal to Ethiopia and where outbreaks and epidemics occur almost every year. In 2017, Niger recorded 3,506 cases of meningitis, causing 232 deaths. Hepatitis E, which appeared for the first time in Diffa in April 2017, continues to spread. Despite large-scale efforts by health workers, as of July, 192 cases of hepatitis E have been registered in the Diffa region since the beginning of the year.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

* More must be done by the international community to help Niger shoulder the burden of extreme poverty, demographic growth, climate change and migration, all at the root of chronic humanitarian needs. While it is critical that life-saving humanitarian assistance continues for those in desperate need, it is also essential to build a more hopeful future for the people of Niger through infrastructure, basic services and job creation.

* Current efforts to promote the collaborative efforts of humanitarian and development actors in Niger must continue to be strengthened. The only solution to ending chronic needs is to strengthen local development. The Government has shown initiative in addressing structural issues, and should be supported.

* Niger’s Government and people have demonstrated great humanity in hosting refugees fleeing violence – not only in Diffa but also in the west where people have fled insecurity in Mali. Their own humanitarian crises may not command headlines, but millions of people are struggling to feed themselves. They deserve and need our continued support. Without it, many would not survive.

* Providing economic opportunities in Niger and West Africa is key to stem the flow of desperate Nigerien and West African migrants risking their lives while trying to reach Algeria, Libya and Europe through the Sahara Desert. While Niger is at the heart of migration routes, we must recognize that it is playing a critical role in helping migrants return home.

* Donor support for Niger cannot waiver. While the humanitarian response plan was well funded in 2017 at 81 per cent of the budget, this year, only 34 per cent of funding was received as of 1 July 2018, compared to 54 per cent at the same period last year.