KEY MESSAGES

• Sustained conflict and military operations associated with Boko Haram coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have led to an increase in the population facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes. In much of the Northeast, household purchasing power is below average as staple food prices remain significantly above normal. This is constraining food access as households’ income-earning opportunities through labor or self-employment remain constrained.

• Worst conflict-affected households in the northwest and central states remain displaced and are unable to engage in normal livelihood activities and have difficulty earning income. Moreover, flooding has resulted in further displacement in these areas. Most displaced households are market dependent with low purchasing power, which is restricting food and non-food access. Worst-affected households are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3), particularly in the northwest, and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) are present in many conflict and flood-affected areas.

• Most poor urban households mainly rely on daily labor and self-employment to access income for purchasing food. The direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have constrained livelihood activities among the urban poor. Thus, the atypically high staple prices have constrained food access for most urban poor with these areas experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2). As restriction measures ease, engagement in daily labor is likely to increase, improving access to non-food items and Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to emerge.

CURRENT SITUATION

Despite largely favorable crop development and improvements in livestock conditions, localized flooding and dry spells coupled with persistent high-levels of conflict (Figure 1) in the northern areas and the indirect impacts of COVID-19 is negatively impacting the main season across the country. Furthermore, this is leading to an increase in humanitarian assistance needs in the ongoing lean season, as the harvest of early maturing maize, groundnuts, potatoes, and millet is not leading to large-scale improvements in food insecurity.

The confirmed number of COVID-19 cases continues increasing with over 53,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of August 30, with a case fatality rate of 1.9 percent. Since May, authorities started community testing, primarily in urban areas; however, the coverage remains low with less than 1 percent of the population being tested. Community spread of the disease is most
likely ongoing. Borno State, the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency, has 740 confirmed COVID-19 cases, while Adamawa and Yobe states recorded 221, and 67 cases, respectively.

Despite the number of increasing COVID-19 cases, the government continues to ease restriction measures. While most measures meant to limit the spread of the disease have been lifted including markets and businesses re-opening, resumption of air travel, a nationwide curfew between 10 pm and 4 am as well as restrictions on mass gatherings and sporting activities, remain in effect. The use of masks in public spaces is also mandatory.

While COVID-19 and conflict have impacted many household’s ability to engage in the ongoing season and area planted is below-average, planted crops are in good condition, with many farmers weeding and applying fertilizer normally. A prolonged dry spell in localized areas of Niger and Benue States resulted in the wilting of some late-planted maize crops. Although, rainfall in late August has led to improvements in crop conditions where crops were previously impacted by the prolonged dry spell. There have been a few reports of Fall Army Worm (FAW) primarily in Adamawa State and in other localized areas of the country. In southern areas, the green harvest is underway, while the harvest of early millet, maize, groundnuts, potatoes, and rice is starting in areas of the northern states.

Heavy rainfall in July and August has led to flash flooding across northwestern and northcentral Nigeria. According to IOM, nearly 15,000 people were displaced due to flooding in Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto States between July and mid-August. Moreover, in early August, storms with heavy rainfall and wind damaged IDP camps in the northeast leaving nearly 350 people without shelter. Normal levels of flooding were reported in July and early August notably in Lagos, Anambra, Kogi, Kwara, and other southern states, with floodwaters easing during the typical dry period, commonly referred to as the August Break. Furthermore, the recent release of water from the Goronyo dam and upstream floods from the Niger Republic has led to the damage of infrastructure and cropping lands as well as displacement in Kebbi, Sokoto, and Niger States. Though the full extent of damage associated with flooding is yet to be determined as assessments are underway, preliminary reports indicate several thousand hectares of rice farms remain submerged, particularly in Kebbi state.

The macroeconomic conditions continue to deteriorate with the slow but persistent increase in annual inflation to 12.82 percent in July, decline in foreign reserves, and continued depreciation of the NGN on the parallel market. The decline in foreign reserves is largely driven by the continued low oil exports of 1.81 million barrels/day in Quarter 2, down from 2.2 million barrels/day prior to the pandemic and continued low oil prices of around $45/barrel in late August. The Government will resume the weekly sale of FOREX to the Bureau de Change (BDC) on August 31. As of August 25, the parallel market exchange rate fell to 476 NGN/USD with the official rate set at 380 NGN/USD. The National Bureau of Statistics reported the national GDP decreased by over 6 percent in Quarter 2 of 2020 compared to the same period of 2019, ending a three-year trend of growth since the 2016/17 recession. The decline was largely attributable to significantly lower levels of both domestic and international economic activity during the quarter, due to the nationwide efforts aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19.

While maize and millet availability on the market is increasing, this has had a limited impact on staple food prices which continue to broadly increase, remaining above last year and five-year average. Staple cereal prices, including that of millet, maize, and sorghum is relatively higher in conflict-affected areas of the northeast to other markets in the country (Figure 2).
Food prices are increasing due to the deteriorating macroeconomy and recent increase in petrol prices. Petrol was deregulated in June with the removal of the price cap. This has increased transportation costs as petrol prices increased to 144 NGN/liter in July from 122 NGN/liter, leading to some price transmission.

Migratory labor movement remains restricted as borders remain closed since August 2019. Similarly, domestic labor movement also remains restricted due to reduced labor demand as income remains constrained. Thus, labor wages remain below average in most areas.

Attacks in early and mid-August across the northeast, although concentrated in Borno State has led to continued displacement and fatalities. Moreover, the continued Boko Haram attacks and military operations continue to disrupt livelihood and seasonal activities, including limiting access to farmlands. This is further worsened by the recent ban of tricycle movement predominately in urban areas of Borno State further limiting people movement and income for those reliant on this as an income source. Most displaced people relocated to urban centers and state capitals. According to the IOM, between August 10 and 16 nearly 1,500 movements were recorded, comprising of 1,226 arrivals and 230 departures. Most of the movements are due to voluntary relocations, poor living conditions, and conflict.

Conflict in North Central and Northwest States, comprising of long-standing communal conflict, kidnapping, and banditry has increased in the last month leading to a fresh wave of displacement. In early August, over 3,500 people were displaced in select states of the northwest and center. The Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) indicated that over 480,000 IDPs reside mainly in host communities and in 8 official camps within the state. An assessment in July 2020 by UNHCR in the Maradi Region of Niger Republic indicated there were over 70,000 new refugees, mainly from Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara states where the conflict continues to escalate.

In May over 2.3 million people received food and livelihood assistance across Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States with over 1.4 million food assistance beneficiaries. Humanitarian actors scaled-up livelihood and food assistance in June to the Northeast, reaching about 3.0 million people in June, with over 1.8 million people receiving food assistance across Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. Most beneficiaries of food assistance are in displacement camps in Borno State, with over 1.6 million people receiving food assistance in displacement camps. Humanitarian actors are providing 70 percent of the monthly household ration in cash or in-kind.

Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes persist in much of the northeast, with hard to reach areas in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Most conflict-affected households in northwest and northcentral states are atypically dependent on markets for food and with limited incomes. As food prices are high, many households have resorted to less preferred foods and reduced quantity and frequency of meals. Most of these households are in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) with some of the worst conflict-affected households facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3). In areas less impacted by conflict and where flooding has damaged infrastructure and farmland, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) are present with some households likely in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has constrained income-earning activities, particularly among urban households. Urban households are mainly dependent on informal and daily labor work which remains restricted and as a result, most urban areas remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2).
UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the Nigeria Food Security Outlook for June 2020 to January 2021 remain unchanged.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JANUARY 2021

Most poor households are expected to remain market dependent with limited purchasing power until the main harvest and are likely to remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) in some flood and conflict-affected areas of the country. In October, when the harvest becomes available and households start to access own foods, there is likely to be an improvement in food security across much of the country, with many areas expected to be in Minimal (IPC Phase 1). However, some areas of the north where conflict is relatively higher and displacement is expected to lead to large-scale reductions in income and access to own food, many households will still have difficulty meeting their non-food needs. As a result, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely in these areas with the worst conflict-affected households in Sokoto, Zamfara, and Katsina states continuing to face food consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Conflict-affected areas in the Northeast are expected to face the most severe outcomes with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes anticipated throughout the entire projection period. In these areas, displaced households outside of IDP settlements and urban centers have no food stocks with limited incomes and are like to have difficulty meeting their food and non-food needs until the harvest in October. With the harvest, households that engaged in crop production are expected to consume own foods; however, access to food is still expected to be generally limited and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected through at least January 2021 in much of Borno State. Areas, where populations are affected by significant losses of livelihood activities and remain inaccessible to humanitarian actors, are likely facing similar or worse outcomes as adjacent, accessible areas. A risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5) persists throughout this period in a worst-case scenario in which there is a significant shift in conflict that would reduce household access to food and income.

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. ▶️ indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). 🔴 indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

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*ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET’s Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work here.