Concerns as the latest food security analysis is released

Across Nigeria’s north-east almost 4.5 million people face acute food insecurity and require immediate assistance, according to the latest Cadre Harmonisé analysis, released on 19 August.

There are 65,000 individuals in Phase 5 (famine) from different Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Borno and Yobe states. While these numbers are significant they do not meet the 20 per cent minimum of a given population for declaring a specific area to be under Phase 5.

More than 1 million people in three of Nigeria’s northeast states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe are in Phase 4 (emergency), while about 3.3 million are in Phase 3 (crisis). The 7-year conflict has devastated food production, leaving upwards of 5 million people in urgent need of food assistance.

Given the severity of the situation and the windows of opportunity offered by access to newly accessible areas, immediate action and funding is required to rapidly restore food security and tackle severe hunger and malnutrition.

IDPs moved to allow schools reopen

At the height of the conflict wreaked by Boko Haram more than 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) descended on Maiduguri, Borno’s state capital, pushing the population from 1 million to 2.5 million. Up to 90 per cent were subsumed into the community and the remainder moved into ad hoc and government-run camps. The huge numbers placed a great strain on infrastructure and schools were taken over to house displaced families in an effort to provide some form of shelter. This resulted in the schools’ closure and negatively affected education for the children of Maiduguri.

On 22 August, 23,410 IDPs were relocated to new sites in Bakassi and Dalori IDP camps in Maiduguri. Families that were separated for nearly a year were re-unified from different camps and are living in household shelters at the new sites. The last group of IDPs in the Arabic Teaching Centre Camp will be relocated to Bakassi in early September, after the completion of WASH facilities construction.
The IDPs relocated from schools and other government institutions to pave the way for the reopening of educational institutions…

The IDPs relocated from schools and other government institutions to pave way for the reopening of educational institutions closed for more than two years due to increased Boko Haram attacks in the city. In October 2015, the state government constituted a ‘High Powered Committee’ (HPC), tasked with the responsibility of facilitating the reopening of schools in Maiduguri.

**Coordinating IDP movement**

Planning and response of the relocation exercises was coordinated jointly with the HPC and OCHA ensuring adherence to the global relocation guidelines. OCHA also mobilised funding from CERF for the construction of shelters and WASH facilities at the new sites. The pilot phase of the relocation started on 15 February 2016, when IDPs in Yerwa Camp were relocated to Dalori 1 Camp in Maiduguri. The ICRC constructed temporary shelters in Dalori 1 and 2, while NGOs and UN agencies constructed temporary shelters and WASH facilities in Bakassi Camp.

While the family reunification and shelter situations have been addressed at Bakassi and Dalori relocation sites, flooding due to heavy rain fall remains a major challenge in Bakassi camp. However, CCCM/Shelter & NFIs and WASH Sectors are working to address the problem by constructing more adequate drainage in the camp.

**Gaining access**

There are 2.1 million people still in inaccessible areas across Adamawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe in Nigeria’s north-east as a result of Boko Haram violence and counter insurgency measures. Communities find themselves trapped in areas where they fear being caught in conflict and as a result have no access to vital assistance. Humanitarians wish to see the clear distinctions between the action and the mandates of different forces.

Inaccessible communities are in desperate need of food, clean water, and sanitation and health services. The humanitarian space in which the NGOs and agencies can operate is extremely limited. Insufficient access to the displaced population is a cause of concern as they are already experiencing the agricultural lean season with little or no access to basic health services.

**Obstacles**

Currently only a few of the 26 LGAs in Borno State are safely accessible to emergency teams. Land mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war are just some of the deadly obstacles that prevent communities receiving support. Counterinsurgency measures and related insecurity is a major factor impeding humanitarian operations in many parts of Borno as well as direct attacks by Boko Haram. Too often people are caught up or held hostage in battle zones, restricting access to the population or their ability to seek refuge somewhere safer.

**Addressing access issues**

Any attack or threat of armed actors against those delivering humanitarian assistance can result in the temporary suspension of activities or a temporary withdrawal of the humanitarian community. Nature is not always on our side either and the current rainy season resulted in cutting off several LGAs from humanitarian assistance, due to flooding. The inefficient and uncoordinated use of scarce resources such as poorly planned and coordinated requests for air and cargo logistics is another factor limiting access.
Addressing the multiple issues surrounding access, a new position within the OCHA Borno team was created to develop and offer support to humanitarian partners and the affected population equally. German national, Sebastian Weber joined the Maiduguri office recently and said he “hopes to overcome at least some of the multiple barriers that limit the urgently-needed assistance to ensure it reaches the survivors of violence, persecution and displacement.”

Weber will work on documenting constraints, facilitate evidence-based advocacy efforts and negotiate access where possible. His work will also involve ensuring that improved logistical and protection capacity is made available and used more efficiently.

**Moving forward**

Enhanced engagement with local civil society and supporting their capacity will be another important way to get support to those in need. The strengthening and use of markets and the private sector may in some cases present a safer and more efficient alternative to humanitarian convoys. Prepositioning or the use of alternative supply routes can help to counter the impact of recurrent adverse weather effects. Continued humanitarian communication and capacity building could help to increase the respect of the humanitarian mandate and the acceptance of humanitarian action.

“We will look for breaches in the ‘wall’, ways around it, tunnels under or ladders to climb over – the ultimate objective is to increase humanitarian access without exposing both population and humanitarian workers to unacceptable risks,” Weber commented.

**Respecting everyone’s dignity: Gender mainstreaming in humanitarian response**

Seven years of conflict, displacement and disruption of household and community structures across Nigeria’s north-east have changed the demographic profile and dynamics. Women and children make up over 80 per cent of the IDP population across Adamawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe States, where approximately one in four households are headed by women, representing a huge shift in traditional custom.

Almost one in five households supports one or more unaccompanied child, over one in five includes at least one member with a chronic illness, and an average of one in 10 households supports a member with a mental or physical disability. Report after report also highlights the extent of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls when they are most vulnerable.

**Targeting of funding required**

Where the humanitarian response is under-resourced and cannot meet demand, there is a need to ensure humanitarians can prioritize and target limited funding to where it is needed most. By raising awareness and providing humanitarian workers with the capacity to do so, we can better address the distinct needs of diverse groups of affected people. By doing so, we can change how we deliver humanitarian assistance.

Training on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action was provided through a series of workshops for the humanitarian community in the north-east. A workshop was held in Maiduguri, hosted by UNHCR and the remaining three workshops hosted by UN Women in late August in Abuja. Facilitated by OCHA’s gender advisor, a total of 125 humanitarian actors from national and international NGOs, state bodies and civil society organizations participated.
The World Humanitarian Summit recognized that the humanitarian community needs to change the way it delivers services and one positive step in this direction is to ensure that gender and diversity are encompassed in all our responses.

One participant in the workshops commented “This has made me re-think many issues in my work that I haven’t considered before now. Gender mainstreaming is now real to me, largely because of the pragmatic examples and exercises. …I have […] work to do to ensure that those with the greatest needs are been addressed. The issue of respecting the dignity of everyone is important. I have to respect what the displaced person considers to be dignifying and act accordingly”.

World Humanitarian Day in Nigeria

World Humanitarian Day (WHD) was marked by civil society, state and federal governments, the private sector, NGOs and the UN agencies on 19 August. Events took place in the federal capital Abuja, Maiduguri and Bama in Nigeria’s north-east where the humanitarian crisis is unfolding.

In Maiduguri, a woman represented the internally displaced community at commemorations for WHD and described her situation. Fatima spoke in her local language Hausa, and told an audience of 200 people about living conditions in an IDP camp. She spoke dispassionately about how she had to resort to boiling grass to feed her family because they lacked sufficient food. Fatima spoke of her greatest wish to return home safely to her own community. She pleaded for assistance to enable her and her family to go back to their old life and leave behind the hunger and the misery of living in an IDP camp. Fatima is one of 150 IDP ambassadors appointed as focal points for the common feedback service and response mechanism in the IDP camps on WHD.

Events on the day in Maiduguri were coordinated by the head of the Network of Civil Society Organizations, good-will Ambassador Ahmed Shehu, with support from OCHA. A presentation was made on the role of civil society and international organizations in ensuring effective humanitarian interventions.

ASG/RHC Toby Lanzer visit

Also as part of the WHD commemorations, Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, Toby Lanzer arrived in Nigeria on a week-long mission. On a three-day visit to the north-east, he was accompanied by the BBC, The Times (UK), Al Jazeera and the Economist to Maiduguri and Bama.

The media visited official and ad-hoc camps in Maiduguri and travelled to Bama to see the response of the humanitarian community in this newly accessible area. Up to 10,000 people in Bama are now receiving health services and access to their basic needs including vital food, shelter and WASH.