

Humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad region

February 2021

Facts and figures

Lake Chad region: 12.5M people are in need of humanitarian assistance and more than 80% are in Nigeria

Population displacement

Nigeria: 2,118,550 IDPs (December 2020)

Cameroon: 321,886 IDPs and 17'422 Nigerian refugees

(IOM, UNHCR, Government- December 2020)

Chad: 336'124 IDPs and 16'127 Nigerian refugees

(IOM, UNHCR, Government- December 2020)

Niger: 102,726 IDPs and 171'013 Nigerian refugees

(Government/UNHCR - December 2020)

UN Appeals for 2021

Nigeria: 1.1.bio USD

Cameroon: 360 mio USD

Niger: 500 mio USD

Chad: 550 mio USD

SDC allocations 2020 (in mio CHF)

Organisa-tion	Country	Alloca-tion
ICRC	All	7.75
WFP	All	5
IOM	Nigeria	0.5
UNICEF	Nigeria	0.54
UNHCR	Chad	0.75
OCHA	Came-roon	0.5
UNDP	Nigeria	0.4
Nigeria Humanita-rian Fund	Nigeria	2
NGOs (COOPI, DRC, INSO, IRC, etc.)	All	3.4
Total 2020		20.85



Switzerland's humanitarian support in the Lake Chad region

The regional armed conflict in the Lake Chad region (LCR), now in its eleventh year, has resulted in one of the biggest humanitarian crises worldwide with north-east Nigeria as epicenter. About 12.5 million people still require humanitarian support, with a majority being women and children according to OCHA. Food insecurity has increased dramatically in 2020. Also, many civilians continue to suffer human rights violations and are traumatized by the violence.

According to the United Nations (UN), the four conflict affected countries in the LCR hosted nearly 3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) by the end of 2020, and about 304'500 Nigerian refugees are in Cameroon, Niger and Chad. The protracted displacement, sustained insecurity, and limited access to land and basic services continue to impact communities' ability to engage in livelihoods, and weakens prospects for durable solutions, such as return movements and local integration.

In 2020, insecurity and violence continued to escalate in many localities, uprooting thousands of people across the region and particularly in northeastern Nigeria. This has not only traumatized thousands more civilians, but also made humanitarian access and aid delivery more challenging.

With around 117 million CHF allocated since 2014, Switzerland ranks among the 10 biggest humanitarian donors. Its financial contributions have strengthened efforts of UN Agencies, ICRC and NGOs to bring assistance and protection to vulnerable and conflict affected populations (refugees, displaced people and host communities). It further supports national and regional frameworks, such as the Revised Regional Protection and Solutions Strategic Framework and respective Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs). Switzerland also mobilized funds to support the COVID-19 response in the LCR.

A small team of SDC Humanitarian Affairs Advisers are based in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon to engage with key stakeholders on the humanitarian response, and oversee the portfolio implementation.

Context

The ongoing LCR crisis has largely been triggered by a regionalized armed conflict with northeast Nigeria as epicenter. This protracted crisis continues to be characterized by significant protection threats and large-scale population movements. Prior to the armed conflict, the area was already mired by socioeconomic, governance and environmental challenges.

Populations remain caught in the middle of violent attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), popularly known as Boko Haram - particularly Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad (JAS) - and its emerging splinter groups, as well as counterinsurgency operations of the armed forces. Despite several military advances by both the Multinational Joint Task Force and state security forces, insecurity prevails in many areas. In addition, attacks, reprisals, and suicide bombings targeting armed forces and civilians continue. In 2020, the UN estimated that the conflict resulted in the death of about 35,000 persons in Nigeria alone since the onset of the armed crisis in 2009. 2.7M people remain displaced across the region. Insecurity, as well as security measures continue to restrict free movement and hamper humanitarian access and assistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to both deepen humanitarian needs and complicate the response according to the UN. The organisation further expects severe consequences on people's livelihoods and food security.

Current needs

The LCR - comprising Nigeria's Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states in the north east; Cameroon's Far North Region; Chad's Lac Region; and Niger's Diffa Region - continues to face a severe protection crisis. Many civilians remain exposed to protracted displacement in IDP camps or host communities, suffer abuse and rights violations and are traumatized by violence; they have considerable protection needs. Also, due to the volatile situation, millions of civilians have limited access to land and livelihoods, thereby depriving them of their means of survival.

Since 2016, humanitarian assistance in the region was considerably scaled up. However, needs still remain high. The UN estimates that in 2020, 12.5M people require humanitarian assistance across the Lake Chad region, with women and children comprising 80 per cent. The crisis has also heightened food needs in the LCR, with up to 5.1M people risk being critically food insecure in the BAY states according to the October 2020 *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis.

In addition, affected persons across the region are also experiencing extremely high levels of educational and health needs. Basic facilities and services were severely lacking in the region before the crisis. The return of local authorities, investment in basic services, and joint engagements of humanitarian, development and peace-building actors are necessary for a sustainable return of displaced communities.

Scope of Switzerland's current humanitarian response

SDC Humanitarian Aid provides financial contributions to partner organizations working in food assistance, livelihood, protection and education in emergencies within the LC region. While funds are primarily allocated for emergency assistance, funding is also provided for initiatives that contribute to longer-term local institutional capacity-building, and the promotion of localization of aid in line with Switzerland's Grand Bargain commitments. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, SDC also supports efforts to reduce the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations.

Switzerland also closely follows the conflict dynamics and political developments related to the crisis through its Embassies in Abuja and Yaoundé, as well as its Cooperation offices in Niger and Chad. Embassies and Cooperation Offices enjoy privileged relations with the national and international institutions involved in the response to the crisis. The presence of four Humanitarian Affairs Advisers based in the region (Abuja, Niamey Yaoundé and N'Djamena) ensures local stakeholder engagement and regularly travels to the affected areas to track the progress and quality of the humanitarian response in the region.

Backing life-saving food and livelihood assistance

SDC partners, comprising the WFP, ACF, and ICRC continue to deliver emergency food and livelihood assistance to vulnerable populations across the region, comprising cash-based or in-kind food assistance. During recent months, the WFP assisted about 900'000 per month on average across the conflict affected BAY states through unconditional in-kind and cash-based food distributions, with the support of SDC and other donors.

Efforts to improve the protection and welfare of civilians comprising mental health/psychosocial support and access to education for children.

SDC finances projects of COOPI (Niger), TdH (Nigeria), IOM (Nigeria) and UNFPA (Nigeria) which provide mental health and psychosocial support to displaced women, children, and youth, including GBV survivors. These organizations create safe spaces in refugee camps and IDP sites and enable access to post-traumatic early treatment. Children with special needs are referred to appropriate services, including access to education. SDC continued its support UNICEF in Nigeria to provide reintegration services to children formerly associated with armed groups, including psychosocial support and family reunification services. Moreover, the ICRC documents allegations of abuse, and monitors detention facilities to ensure that inmates are treated according to recognized standards and applicable law.

With contributions to ICRC, large populations in the Lake Chad region regained access to life-saving medical care. Violence against medical personnel and facilities has caused dozens of hospitals to close and staff to flee in the region. Two-thirds of health facilities have been damaged by the conflict, while the remaining functioning health structures need extensive support - in the form of funding, medical supplies and deployment of medical teams - to care for patients, especially women and children.

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