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FAO response to the crisis in northeast Nigeria

August 2016

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IDPs in northeast Nigeria ©FAO/S. Nguyen.

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Overview

Food security in northeast Nigeria used to be based on a very complex set of agricultural, livestock and fishery production systems providing food to a large territory. The north-eastern region of Nigeria comprises several livelihood zones including the Lake Chad shores and open water, a large Sahel belt with livestock and dryland cereal production, a secondary more humid belt with cereal, cassava and sesame and one large much more productive area where many food and cash crops grow easily. Between these different zones and neighbouring countries, trade has always been very active and allowed the development of trading hubs such as Maiduguri. As the stated in several in-depth studies of the regional agro ecosystems, the resilience of this area was largely linked to its "3 M" strategy – mobility, multi-activity, multipurpose land use under the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The last three years of conflict have transformed a dynamic and populated rural area but largely marginalized in terms of development strategy into a zone of considerable suffering, significant displacement and high food insecurity. Access to the areas beyond the most protected perimeters has been difficult and aid agencies involved in food security and support to the agriculture sector have been significantly constrained in their access to rural areas. Yet, things appear to be changing and new areas are progressively accessible. This offers windows of opportunity that cannot be missed.

Key messages

The Cadre Harmonisé report released on 19 August 2016 indicates that **4.5 million people are severely food insecure (Phase 3 to 5) in northeast Nigeria and require immediate assistance**, an increase of 50 percent compared with March 2016. Over 65 000 people are classified in Phase 5 (Famine), while the number of those in Phase 4 (Emergency) as tripled since March 2016, reaching over 1 million. Hard-to-reach areas of Borno and Yobe States, where food insecurity has reached extreme levels, are of particular concern. Such a rapid deterioration of the food security situation is linked to conflict and displacement and to the lack of relevant food production in the last three years and the consequent depletion of household and market food stocks.

The emergency strategy of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is based on the hypothesis that **strengthening capacity to rapidly restore food production among the different farming communities in affected areas will contribute significantly, not just to improving food security, but also to paving the road back to resilience and stability in the region.**

FAO is therefore focusing on: (i) mitigating the impact of the conflict on the livelihood crisis; and (ii) strengthening the resilience of communities affected by the crisis.

Given the severity of the situation, the need to urgently address the dramatic food security situation and the windows of opportunity offered by the opening of new areas, FAO has declared Nigeria an internal L3 surge and mobilized accordingly. FAO capacity is currently being strengthened and internal resources are being mobilized to kick-start the response and support coordination efforts.

However, FAO's activities remain constrained by a serious lack of funding.

USD 10 million is needed now to provide agricultural inputs to IDPs and host families in time for the upcoming irrigated dry season and to support the livestock sector, in order to save the livelihoods of vulnerable rural households and improve food security.

A renewed commitment from resource partners is needed to expand interventions to newly liberated areas rendered accessible to humanitarian assistance in recent months.

Current situation and programmatic parameters

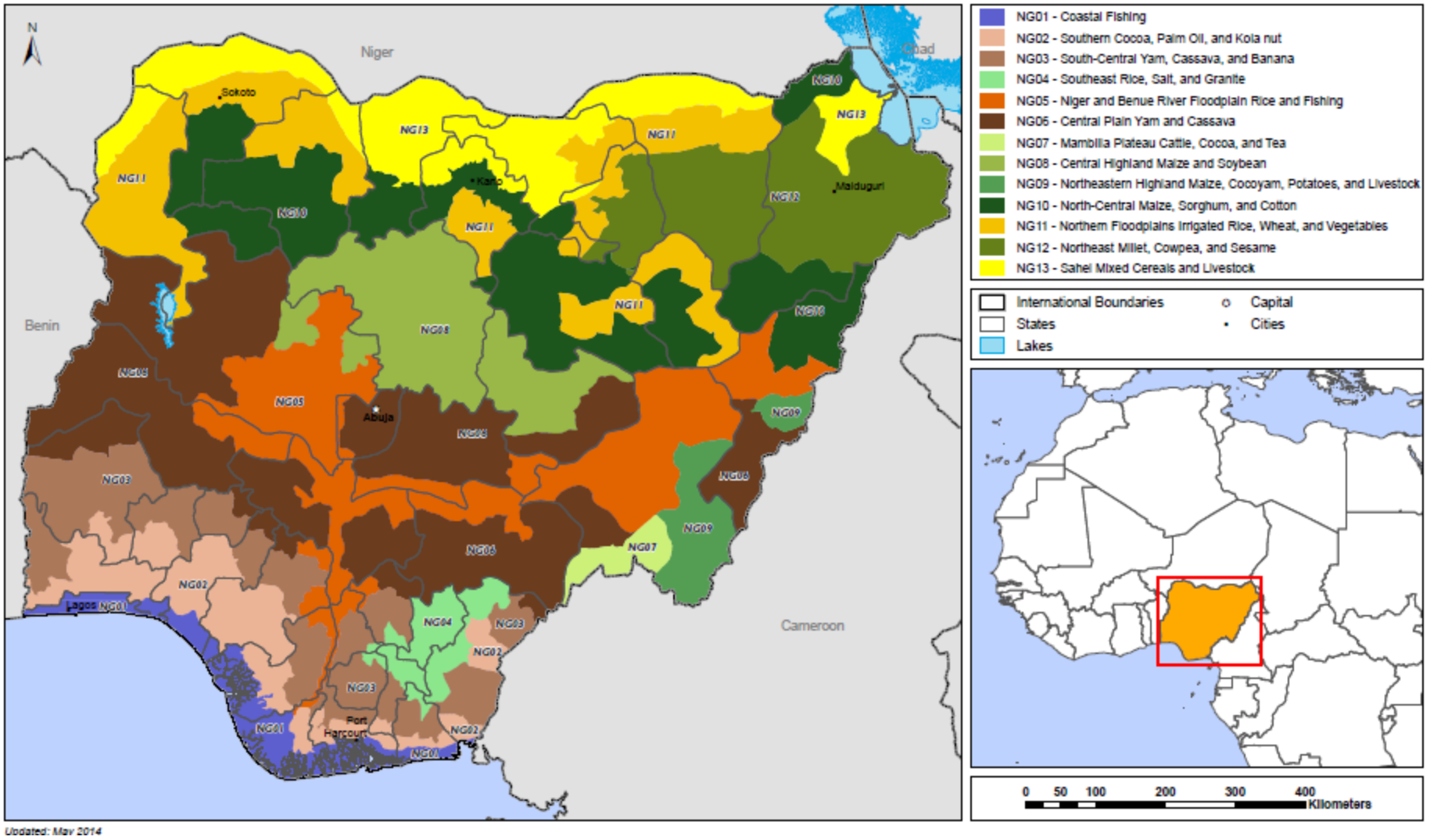
Diversity and complexity

Due to diverse political considerations, North East Nigeria has long been marginalized in terms of development policies. This has open the door for a conflict targeting not only national administrative institutions and militaries, but also the civilian population at large. The regional strategy of the actors of violence led to a regional military and political response involving Nigeria and its three neighbours, with whom Nigeria shares not only borders, but resources, with the Lake Chad, and problems, with the impact of climate changes.

The impact of conflict on agriculture in northeast Nigeria is estimated at USD 3.7 billion, resulting from livestock losses; destruction of irrigation and farming facilities and collapse of extension services, market and trade facilities; coupled with reduced production due to access limitations. Looting and fear of attacks have prevented many farmers from working in their fields in the past years, leading to the loss of harvests, productive assets and extremely reduced purchasing power. An estimated 80–90 percent of the population in the Lake Chad area depend on agriculture, fisheries and livestock for their livelihoods and food security. Returning to farming is therefore a priority.

Following improvements in the security situation, some farmers felt secure to return to their fields for the first time in two to three years. Host communities, where possible, provide access to land for internally displaced persons (IDPs); however, the lack of agricultural inputs represents a major constraint for many farmers, who will therefore continue to rely on prolonged and expensive humanitarian assistance to meet their food needs in the coming months. Wider negative impact includes the lack of economic and employment opportunities with possible harmful consequences, including youth radicalization and enrolment into armed groups, resulting in continued civil unrest. FAO will use all of its technical competency and relationships with national actors involved in agriculture and livestock production to design and implement an action plan that is area specific and adapted to the variety of agro-ecosystems of the concerned regions of northeast Nigeria. Due to persistent Boko Haram activities in Borno State, FAO will integrate a certain degree of caution in carrying out livelihoods restoration activities in order to ensure the beneficiaries security.

Northeast Nigeria Livelihood Zones Map*

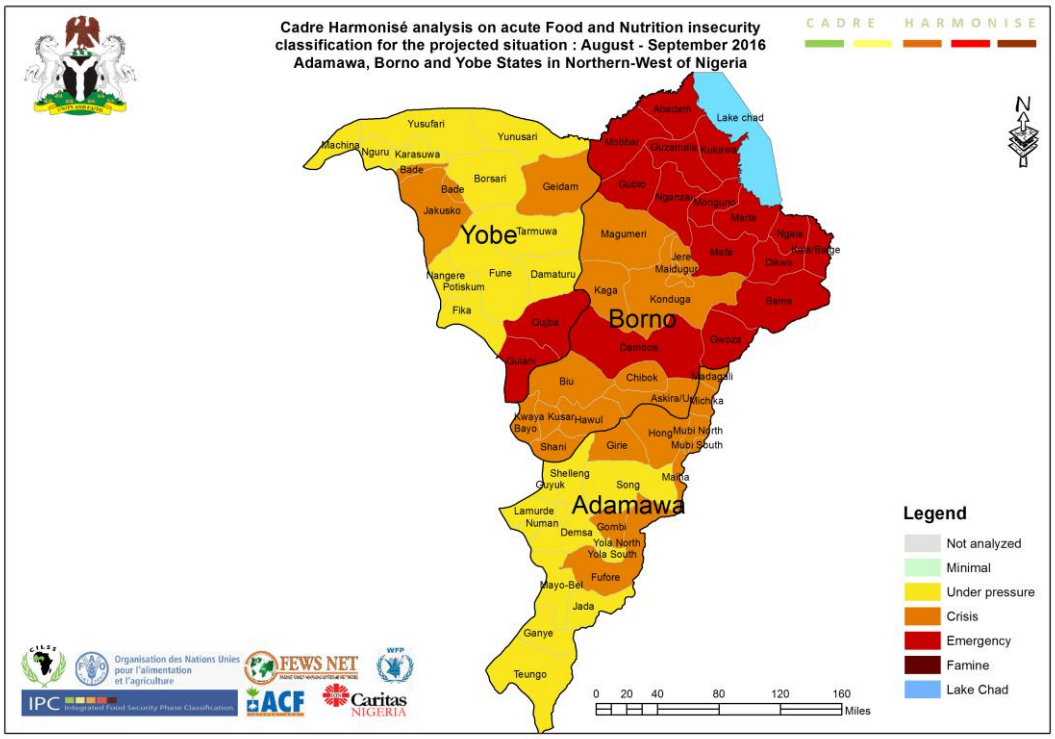


Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET)

Assessments

CILSS and its partners have undertaken a joint rapid assessment in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states (Government, CILSS, FAO, WFP, FEWS NET and the United Nations Children's Fund) and a Cadre Harmonisé analysis was released on 19 August 2016. Findings show that **4.5 million people are severely food insecure (Phase 3 to 5) in northeast Nigeria and require immediate assistance**, an increase of 50 percent compared with March 2016. Over 65 000 people are classified in Phase 5 (Famine), while the number of those in Phase 4 (Emergency) has tripled since March 2016, reaching over 1 million.

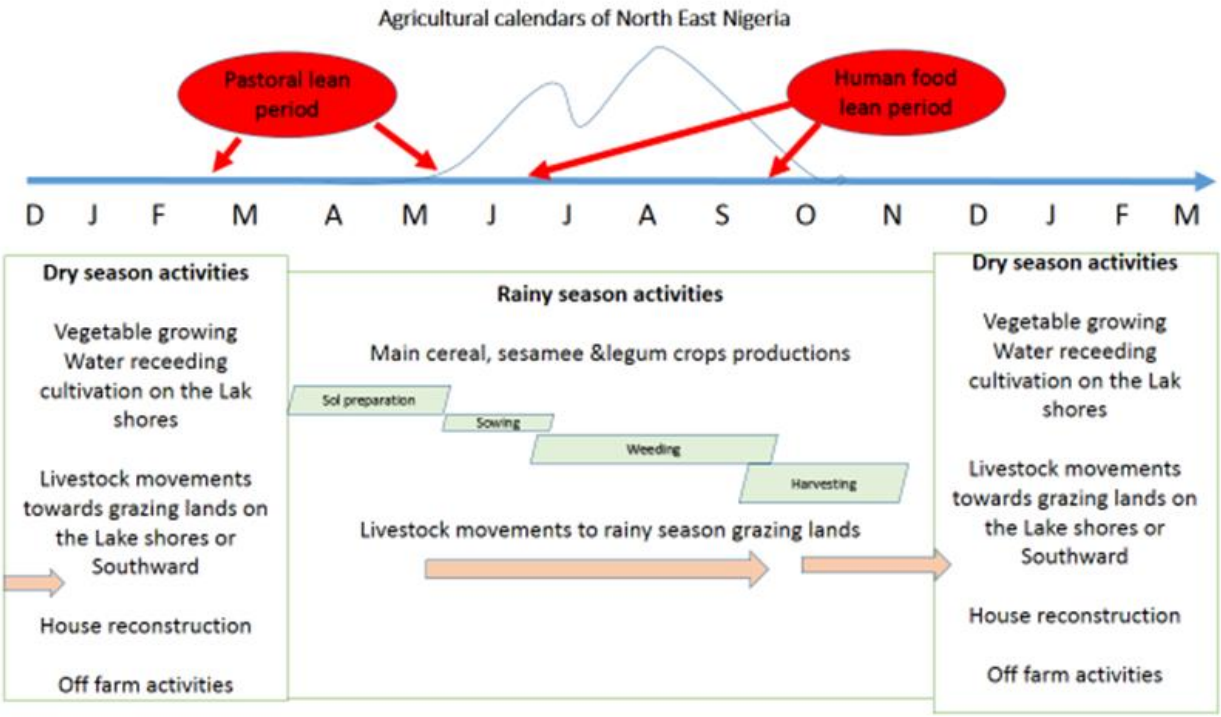
Hard-to-reach areas of Borno and Yobe States, where food insecurity has reached extreme levels, are of particular concern. Such a rapid deterioration of the food security situation is linked to conflict and displacement and to the lack of relevant food production in the last three years and the consequent depletion of household and market food stocks.



FAO is also preparing to carry out a seeds assessment in partnership with FEWS NET. In view of the complexity of the agro-ecosystems of the northeast and the duration of the crisis, it is important to assess the level of seed security (what is still available in terms of seeds in farmers' granaries) and the potential sources of seeds of similar characteristics that can be identified in neighbouring and less-affected Nigeria regions and states. This will involve strong collaboration with Nigerian institutions in charge of agriculture and seed production in these areas, in addition to the coordination with the Maiduguri agricultural administration.

On the side of the Government, several strategic action plans have been prepared, and synthesised in the Buhari Plan "Rebuilding the Northeast", which represents a significant national effort.

It is important to ensure that all the plans are fully in line with existing crop calendars of Northern Nigeria States with the coming dry season period coming and the need to prepare early next year's rainy season agricultural season.



Mitigating the impact of the conflict on the livelihood crisis

FAO is focusing its activities on: (1) mitigating the impact of the conflict on the livelihood crisis; and (2) strengthening the resilience of communities affected by the crisis. The Response Plan thus comprises two items: a six-month action plan; and a resilience programme that aims to strengthen the resilience of the population in northeast Nigeria.

Six-month plan

USD 10 million needed immediately **Target: 385 000 people**

Strengthening FAO's capacity in Nigeria

Given the deteriorating food security situation in northeast Nigeria, FAO declared an internal Level 3 surge on 21 July 2016.

- A scaling up of FAO operations and strengthening of presence in northeast Nigeria and in Maiduguri in particular started in June. The new sub-office opened in Maiduguri is currently composed of six people, including a senior Emergency Response Manager, an international Operations Officer, and a soon to be deployed Programme Officer, a national Administrative and Finance Assistant and other support staff. Further efforts are being made to fill, as soon as possible, additional technical positions (agricultural, livestock and fisheries experts), a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and a Communication Officer, with a view to having a team of 12 people.
- Several support missions are taking place to strengthen the capacity of the sub-office and elaborate a comprehensive response and resilience strategy to address the food security needs of affected people. The new office in Maiduguri is supported by the FAO office in Abuja. So far, FAO has mobilized USD 4.9 million, including about USD 850 000 of internal funds to respond to the crisis.
- Support to coordination is being provided with the deployment of an Information Management Officer and a Cluster Coordinator and the provision of a national Assistant Cluster Coordinator.

Immediate livelihood support for rural households, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, urban and peri-urban IDPs and host communities

The focus will be on nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities and initial steps to recapitalize rural dwellers affected by the crisis. These activities will be mainly done in Yobe and in Borno. Special attention will be paid to the newly accessible areas and areas with observable returns of IDPs.

- IDPs with secure access to land, host communities and returnees will be supported in dry season activities starting in November–December, especially for vegetable production and water receding cropping around Lake Chad when security allows. This will imply:
    - support to vegetable growing groups, especially women and youth groups with the provision of seeds, irrigation equipment, tools and other inputs, including technical advice. This could be done by a combination of in kind items distributions and cash transfer through existing rural micro-finance institutions and banks; and
    - specific technical support to ensure that vegetable production induces both a positive nutritional impact and some income for the population.
- Specific attention will be paid to urban IDPs with limited access to land: the experiences gathered by FAO in similar emergency contexts and by the Food for the Cities network supported by FAO indicate that there are many opportunities to be seized in a situation such as northeast Nigeria and its many IDP settlements in or around urban centres. This will imply:
    - provision of specific technical inputs (bags and wood beams for vertical agriculture);
    - specific technical advice on urban agriculture; and
    - support to the negotiation with municipal authorities, if and when required.
- In areas where there are existing irrigation facilities, support will be provided to the upcoming irrigated season. FAO is preparing to target an additional 85 000 people with horticulture packages, comprising seeds, fertilizers and irrigation equipment.
- Rapid rehabilitation of agricultural markets in cities or along the main trading roads in the newly opening areas can be undertaken as a means to support rapid recapitalization of the agricultural systems and access to essential cash for IDP. This means:
    - provision of light building material to set up light market infrastructure; and
    - use of cash-for-work to create or rehabilitate market infrastructure. This can be done by offering short-term employment for youth from both IDP and host communities.
- As they are more easily accessible during the dry season, and as the concentration of herds creates specific conditions for the spread of diseases, pastoralists will be supported through veterinary interventions for cattle and small ruminants. This means:
    - procuring appropriate veterinary medical products and equipment (treatments, vaccines, etc.); and
    - support to the private and public veterinary services.

Preparedness activities to be ready in March 2017 for the beginning of the main rainy season cropping activities

The geographical targeting of this intervention is western Yobe, south Borno and most of Adamawa region.

- This will imply very active networking with seed producers and agricultural administrations in areas less affected by the conflict in order to source sufficient quantities of seeds and planting material of the required types.
- Pre-harvest contracts may have to be signed with seed producers and seed production centres in order to proactively set aside stocks of cereal and pulses seeds to be distributed early in 2017 for the main agricultural campaign.

Inclusive, comprehensive, targeted assessments and information

Information is an essential tool for managing crisis situations, as their seasonal and conflict-related parameters are subject to many predictable evolutions and unpredictable changes that affect significantly both the needs of the population and the operational environment of FAO and its partners.

- FAO will undertake and support partners in the organization of assessments in relevant technical areas: food security and livelihood assessment (sector-led), land tenure assessment (with focus on areas with high concentration of IDPs and returnees' areas) (FAO-led), livestock assessment with a focus on pastoralists and the use and status of transhumance routes (FAO-led).
- FAO will coordinate and collaborate with all other initiatives dealing with situation and need monitoring, including the International Organization for Migration displacement tracking tool and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) constant surveillance data about changes in the context.
- FAO will collaborate and coordinate with national institutions in charge of agriculture in all concerned states and at the federal level.

Effective coordination for Food Security and Livelihood Sector partners

Coordination is a key ingredient of proper humanitarian response in a complex, fast changing, highly visible and multi-actor context.

- As part of its responsibility as a lead agency for food security sector coordination, FAO will contribute to (i) strengthening the coordination structure in place; and (ii) capacity building for Sector partners.
- Under its mandate, FAO will ensure proper coordination with state and federal agricultural institutions such as Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, and meteorological institutions. It will pay due attention to the plans elaborated by the Government of Nigeria, in particular the Buhari Plan prepared under the leadership of the office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Strengthening the resilience of crisis-affected communities

Building on the emergency programme, a resilience approach will be designed, going beyond the six-month plan with the goal of at strengthening people's resilience and linking Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon in an approach to enhance their resilience based on their shared resource – Lake Chad – , a shorter-term common burden – the Boko Haram insurgency and a long term problem: climate change. This approach will support the "3 M" system (mobility, multi-activity, multiple use of lands) which characterizes large part of the existing agro-ecosystems in North East Nigeria and beyond

Restore livelihood of affected communities (in context of displacements and returns) with a focus on women and youth

FAO will focus its intervention in the three areas of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno on support to sustainable access and use of natural and economic resources.

- Through diverse approaches - used alone or in combination (ecosystem approach to fisheries, Safe Access to Fuel and Energy, job creation as an alternative to livelihood support, *caisse de résilience*, support to food processing, rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure, support to sustainable water management, support to crop management, support to rehabilitation of transhumance corridors through cash-for-work schemes) - FAO will target IDPs in host communities and informal camps, returnees, youth and returnees with no access to land and affected pastoralist communities. Specific mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that most the vulnerable IDPs can also benefit from these programmes (through the establishment of solidarity groups, etc.).

- Resilience strengthening needs its champions and these might not always be among the poorest. Market rehabilitation, support to specialized farmers able to produce seeds of adequate quality and private veterinarians and paramedics will also be key ingredients of the programme.

- Through community-based social protection mechanisms, such as *caisse de résilience* and access to credit, FAO will focus its action on vulnerable returnees (women- and youth-headed households). There are a lot of government and private activities in this sector and it will be essential to start with a short feasibility study to identify the main channels through which to engage in this area.

Ensure coordination with all relevant stakeholders of the resilience agenda in the Lake Chad region

Resilience is the multidimensional outcome of multisectoral interventions often involving a large set of agencies and donors. Coordination is thus critical and FAO will play its full role into this.

- It is essential to liaise with the plans of the federal and state governments, including around the Buhari Plan "Rebuilding the North East".

- Coordination at the Lake Chad Basin level is also critical and FAO Nigeria, together with the FAO representations in the region, will duly liaise with the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

- Large-scale development agencies and banks have demonstrated an interest in participating in strengthening the resilience of the Lake Chad region. FAO will make all efforts to contribute to this collective endeavour.

Conflict prevention and peace building

The Boko Haram insurgency is not a classic civil conflict and is not specifically based on ethnic drivers; however, these could be used by conflict spoilers if the roots of the current conflict are not quickly and properly addressed. The conflict is rooted in a long-term effort to discredit state institutions due to the absence or mismanagement of development aid in the area, a rapid evolution of the demographic profile of the population around the Chad Lake and its periphery and the growth of the influence of radicalism in contexts where there is a largely spread feeling of abandonment.

- From the onset of its intervention, FAO will introduce an approach to recreate a feeling of citizenship with the redevelopment of relations between the population and the agricultural institutions.
- By its presence, FAO will contribute to demonstrating that northeast Nigeria is no longer "forgotten", but deserves proper attention by national and federal institutions, development agencies and donors.

The changing demographic patterns due to the conflict have significantly modified many social contracts between communities in the rural sector and have created new cohabitation needs in the urban and peri-urban areas. Many have been peacefully managed, but there is always a risk, if the situation prolongs, that hospitality will reach its limits. Several activities will be designed and implemented to address this issue.

- The target will be displaced pastoral populations and returnee communities, marginalized women and youth.
- Early warning capacity for monitoring conflict drivers will be strengthened among all partners and the Government.

FAO, resilience and the "3 Ms"

Mobility, multi-activity and multipurpose land use are the keys to the resilience of the population in northeast Nigeria. While the conflict has had a sizeable impact on the 3 Ms, they remain central to the survival of many people.

FAO's future efforts on resilience strengthening will thus support these mechanisms of survival, adaptation and innovation in the area. This means:

- support to the upcoming irrigated season – FAO is preparing to target additional 85 000 people with horticulture packages;
- support to markets (infrastructure and circulation of information about prices);
- support to the fishing value chain (from protection of fishing zones to fish processing and trading) should security conditions allow;
- support to the livestock sector with enhancement of the capacity of the veterinarian sector (private and public), the rehabilitation of the livestock value chain (slaughtering houses, meat quality control, etc.);
- support to the whole area of micro-credit and microfinance institutions; and
- contribute to the work of national research institution on land rights and land use to ensure proper management of land conflicts.

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