

LAKE CHAD'S UNSEEN CRISIS

Voices of refugees and internally displaced
people from Niger and Nigeria

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AFRICA'S FASTEST GROWING DISPLACEMENT CRISIS



THE CRISIS IN FOCUS

In a little known part of the world called the Lake Chad Basin, a violent seven-year conflict originating in Nigeria is causing untold misery and suffering for millions of people. The conflict has intensified in recent years, spread across borders into Niger, Chad and Cameroon and created a growing humanitarian crisis. However, the people at the centre of the crisis remain largely unseen and unassisted by the world.

This is Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis. Over 2.6 million people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of violent acts by a group called *Jama'atu Ahli es Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (commonly known as Boko Haram) and the resulting counter-insurgency operations. The number of displaced people has tripled in the worst-affected areas over the last two years.

// We are all together.
Only the road separates us. //

Dauda, 45, male IDP, Assaga camp, Niger.

Assaga displacement camp is named after Assaga village, which straddles the border of Nigeria and Niger at the Komadougou River. Following attacks by Boko Haram in mid-2015, the people living on both sides of the village fled, creating a camp of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The camp is separated by a highway, rather than a river, with Nigerian refugees on one side and Nigeriens on the other. People's main livelihood is fishing; however, they can't fish from the highway, and the government of Niger has banned fishing in the river.

Above: Women in Assaga displacement camp, Niger. Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam.

Over 1.9 million of these people are Nigerians displaced in their country's north-east – the seventh largest internally displaced population in the world. A further 427,000 people are internally displaced in the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, which also host 155,000 Nigerian refugees.¹

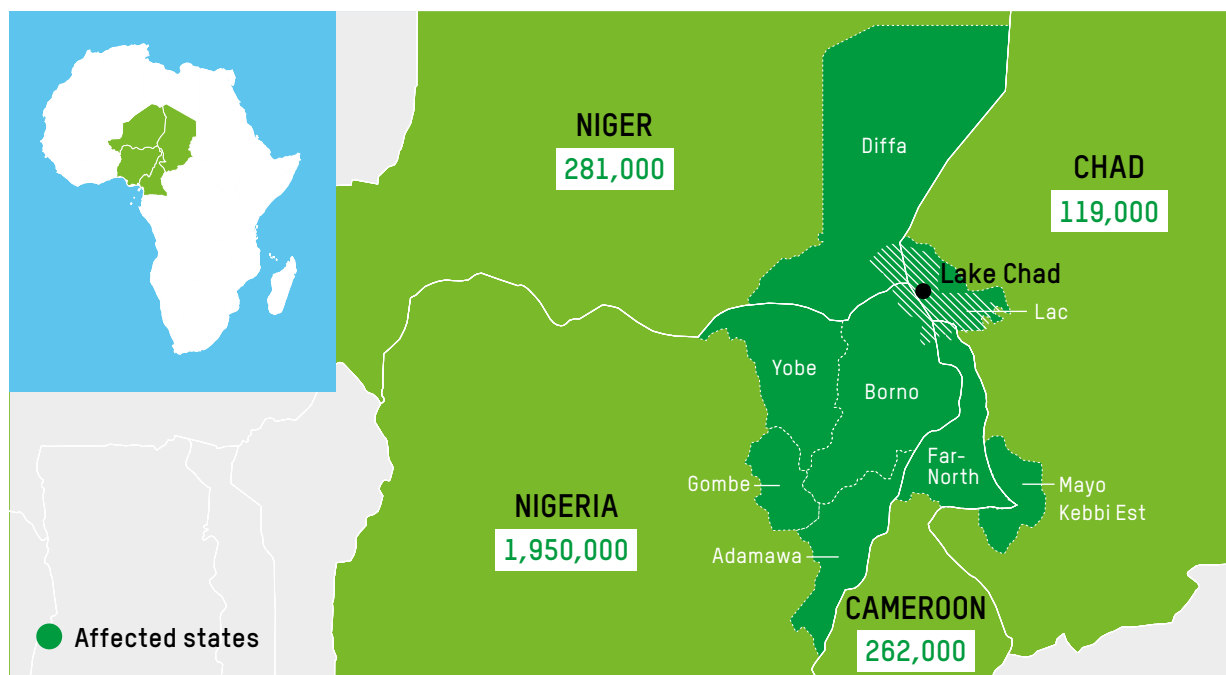
The conflict has caused widespread destruction of vital infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, roads, markets and farmland. Across the region, people are on the move trying to escape threats to their lives, liberty and other human rights in search of safety and protection. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed as a direct result of the violence.² In 2015, around one in every 15 people who died throughout the world as a direct result of violent conflict died in Nigeria.³ Countless more are dying or face permanent disability as a result of hunger, disease and a lack of healthcare, the secondary impacts of war. For example, unless urgent food and nutrition support is provided, 67,000 children under five are predicted to die by September as a result of malnutrition in Nigeria's Borno and Yobe states alone – that means 184 children dying every day.⁴

There is no sign that the conflict will end in the near future. In some areas, there has been an upsurge in violence. With the onset of both the

lean season and the rainy season from July till September, the outlook for the region is grim. Despite the scale of the crisis, it receives very little attention; knowledge of it is not widespread and only 22 percent of the \$559m requested for the Lake Chad Basin humanitarian response has been received.⁵ Everyone that Oxfam spoke to during the preparation of this paper said food is their number one priority and they and their children did not have enough to eat. Despite the frightening levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, food and nutrition remain underfunded across the Lake Chad Basin countries. The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that it could be forced to suspend humanitarian aid for malnourished infants in Niger from September because of a lack of money.⁶

This paper aims to give a voice to some of the women, girls, boys and men displaced by this violence, as well as to their generous hosts. Oxfam spoke to 35 displaced and host families living in seven locations in Niger and Nigeria during April and May 2016. They told Oxfam that one of their main challenges was access to food and income-earning opportunities; they do not want to depend on others. They recounted some of the violence and abuses they had experienced and their ongoing insecurity, and expressed a simple wish for education, healthcare and water for their children.

Internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees in the Lake Chad Basin*



*As of 11 July 2016

RECOMMENDATIONS

DONOR GOVERNMENTS AND UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES MUST:

- **Urgently increase political and financial support** to save hundreds of thousands of lives, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria.
- **Urgently scale up emergency food assistance, nutrition and livelihood support** to guard against potential famine, with a focus on interventions which give people the self-sufficiency they want.
- **Provide access to food and basic services – including free healthcare, water and sanitation and education – as well as income-generating opportunities**, for displaced people who are living outside formal camps.
- **Ensure host communities as well as IDPs are equally prioritized for humanitarian and development assistance.** Host communities have generously shared their meagre resources and also need access to food, basic services and livelihoods support.
- **Protect the vulnerable through the scale-up of protection support services** such as social and psychosocial services, access to healthcare and education. Strengthen the UN Rights Up Front mechanisms to ensure a collective responsibility to prevent the most serious violations,⁷ including forced recruitment and arbitrary arrest and detention of men and boys. **Particular attention should be paid to the needs of women and girls, who are at high risk from protection threats**, including specific livelihood and prevention strategies that protect women and girls from violence, rape and sexual exploitation; **support the Nigerian government to implement the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which it has endorsed.**
- **Invest in further strengthening UN, government and NGO leadership, decision making, coordination and accountability of the humanitarian response.** Strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local actors and coordination in field locations closer to affected populations.

THE GOVERNMENTS OF CAMEROON, CHAD, NIGERIA AND NIGER MUST:

- **Alert the world to the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis and the scale of need in the Lake Chad Basin;** ensure regular and up-to-date information is shared so as to facilitate a rapid scale-up of the response through the mobilization of resources and support from regional and international donor governments alongside increased investment from the national budget.
- **Provide safe and unhindered access to communities**, particularly in insecure and inaccessible areas; introduce fast-track measures and clear, systematic processes to facilitate visas for international humanitarian workers and the importation of urgent relief items; and reduce other administrative barriers.
- **Prioritize the safety of civilians, their dignity and human rights** under national laws, as well as regional frameworks such as the Kampala Convention and the OAU Convention on Refugees, and international human rights and humanitarian law and standards, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for the protection and empowerment of women living through conflict and insecurity. Train military and civilian government personnel on their obligations and people's rights under these laws, and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

- **Ensure adequate security and protection for affected persons against physical abuse, assault, sexual violence, exploitation or loss of life in camps,** and guarantee their freedom of movement without discrimination. Maintain the civilian character of the camps for displaced people; management and security should be provided by civilian bodies and civilian law enforcement agencies.
- **Uphold the right of people to flee conflict and find refuge from violence.** Ensure that relocation, including that which forms part of military operations, and return of people, take place voluntarily to well-prepared sites where adequate assistance, living conditions and protection are available.
- **Develop a framework for durable solutions to displacement** that involves voluntary, safe and dignified returns, local integration or settlement elsewhere, based on informed decisions by displaced people themselves.
- **Protect and facilitate people's freedom of movement and access to their livelihoods** including fishing, farming and markets.
- **National governments should work with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and international donors to address the root causes of the conflict** through investing significantly from national budgets and aid programmes in marginalized areas affected by the conflict. This should include increasing support to state and local authorities, investing in infrastructure and basic service provision, supporting sustainable livelihoods and policies to tackle environmental degradation in the Lake Chad Basin area, and strengthening people's access to justice.



An IDP woman fetching water, from Camp Assaga, Diffa region, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam



ESCALATING HUNGER AND LIVELIHOODS CRISIS

// Our biggest problem is food: we can't find enough to eat. We don't have any money-making activities to buy enough food. We receive aid, but it is insufficient. //

Hadji, 40, a male Nigerian refugee. Gagamari village, Niger

Access to food and income earning opportunities were the dominant and immediate concerns expressed by the people with whom Oxfam spoke. The ongoing conflict has dramatically reduced both the availability of food and people's ability to purchase it.

Some 3.8 million people are facing severe food insecurity and going hungry in the Lake Chad Basin region.⁸ Humanitarian assessments in July 2016 warned that there are already pockets of famine with high levels of mortality due to malnutrition and diarrhoea. Around 30 percent of children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition in north-eastern Nigeria, and up to 15 percent of children suffer from severe acute malnutrition – well above emergency levels.⁹

Violence and displacement are taking a toll on people's livelihoods. Insecurity is preventing people from farming, fishing and trading across borders. Many farmers have not cultivated their lands for three consecutive years because of the insecurity; the river and lake on which fishers have relied have been declared off-limits by some of the governments as part of military operations. The conflict has led to the closure of some of the largest markets in Africa, impacting cross-border trade in cattle, dried fish and agricultural products. The devaluation of the Nigerian naira as a result of the drop in global oil prices, combined with the scarcity of agricultural produce as a result of the conflict, has caused the cost of food to more than double in Nigeria, with similar risks posed to its neighbouring countries.¹⁰

Above: Felling trees for sale is one of the few ways that displaced communities can earn money to feed their families, but this places untold strain on the environment of sub-Saharan Nigeria. Kushari village, Borno State. Photo: Ibrahim Dung/Oxfam

// We have been living here for six months now. We remain hopeful. In particular, we hope they [the government] will allow the market to take place here again. The government has so far forbidden it on the grounds that it supports Boko Haram. //

Ibrahim, 60, a male IDP in Kindjandi spontaneous displacement site, Niger

The livelihoods of both men and women have been disrupted by the conflict. Many women, especially those who are widowed or separated, or who have been abandoned by their husbands, now face additional pressures to provide for their families. Many women struggling to feed their families have been forced to take on negative livelihoods strategies, such as transactional sex in exchange for food or money. Even in camps where

assistance is available, women and girls are also increasingly resorting to 'survival sex', particularly related to food distributions and/or to secure permission to leave camps where movement is restricted. Humanitarian agencies in Nigeria have identified that women who do not receive regular humanitarian assistance nor have opportunities to carry out their previous livelihood activities are at greater risk of abuse.¹¹



// I live here with my family. Every evening we try to pick the seeds to feed the children, but it's difficult. //

Fatma, 17, female IDP with her one-year-old son, Kindjandi spontaneous displacement site, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam

// We come from Damassak in Nigeria. We fled to a village in Niger after Boko Haram attacked our city. The Government of Niger then moved us to this camp on 29 June 2015. Thank God, because generally we get to eat and we have water. I was a farmer before, but we do not have much to do here. **The real problem we have is that we do not have money to invest in our livelihoods.** It is difficult to buy clothes for the children, shoes or food to supplement what we are given. I live in this hut with my wife and my children. //

Abba, 61, male Nigerian refugee. Sayam refugee camp, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam



// Our main problem is a lack of food and clothes for our children. We also have problems accessing health care and treatment. Here, we prepare food for 21 people. At night, the dough is prepared for cassava flour, corn or millet. It depends on what we have in stock as food. It's our husbands who provide the food. We women contribute by making and selling doughnuts...sometimes, as we spend all our money on food to eat, we do not have enough to invest in our doughnut business. **All our belongings were burned because of a fire, and we lost our home.** I was working, selling cakes on the side of the road, and by the time I came back, everything had burned. We then came here to live with the rest of the family. We do not know who triggered the fire, maybe Boko Haram, or maybe someone else. //

Yakouro, female Nigerian refugee. Gagamari village, Niger.
Photo: Yakouro's children. Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam





// I'm a widow; my husband died 10 years ago. I have nine children. The oldest is 37 and the youngest is 17. Including my grandchildren, there are 19 of us in the family. I live with my two grandchildren in this tent. We're from Damassak [in Nigeria] and we first fled to the village of Gagamari [in Niger], before coming here. We've been here since the camp opened 15 months ago. In Damassak, **Boko Haram killed the men and took the girls and women.** I was kidnapped for 18 days. They left us locked in a house before we finally escaped. The mother of that child [points at her grandchild] was also taken. She managed to escape by digging a hole at the back of the house. Otherwise they keep the young women, surely to rape them. There are girls that never return. //

// We have money worries. **We have no money to buy supplements for food like salt, tomatoes and peppers.** They only give us rice, beans and special flour for children. In Damassak, I used to make and sell traditional pasta. If I had some money, I could buy flour and sell pasta in the camp because I was able to bring my pasta machine with me. This was the most important thing that I could bring with me. The other great difficulty here [in the camp] is water. We have only 50 litres per day for the whole family. The tank comes only twice a day. And during the rainy season, it no longer comes. //

Hadiza, 60. female Nigerian refugee, Sayam refugee camp, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Everyone that Oxfam spoke to shared stories of violence, fear and abuse. Many of them are living in situations that make them particularly vulnerable – including widowed or divorced mothers, fathers of children living with disabilities, abduction and rape survivors, men who face harassment and families of the detained.

According to data collected by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED), the insurgency and counter-insurgency violence in Nigeria has caused the highest civilian casualty rate in Africa.¹² Targeted attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the looting and destruction of homes, water sources and

livelihoods are common. Heavy-handed counter-insurgency operations, restrictive emergency regulations and a focus on military objectives rather than the protection of civilians is contributing to violations of human rights, feelings of persecution and vulnerability among already disenfranchised communities.

// The military associates us with Boko Haram. We do not understand why, but that is how it is. We suffer from stigmatization, especially the young people. But if we had connections with them [Boko Haram], we would not have fled and suffered here. //

Dalla, 40, female IDP, Kindjandi spontaneous displacement site, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam



//They [the insurgents] told us that if we ‘tried anything stupid’, they would kill us. They came shooting and shouting at people to surrender to them. I was among those they captured, but my grandmother escaped. **We were held hostage in a building for about three days.** The building next to us also had hostages in it. Some days later we heard the sound of airplanes, and before we knew what was happening we heard bombs falling and explosions. Some people were injured, like me, and some died. I suffered a broken arm and wounds to my leg. The insurgents tried to treat our wounds, but later they left us to our faith. Luckily someone found us, and he went to seek help. So far I have had three operations on my hands and three on my legs.//

Grace, 22, Yola IDP camp, Nigeria.
Photo: Ibrahim Dung/Oxfam



The crisis is affecting 3.8 million children in Nigeria, and unusually high numbers of young children and people over 60 are among the displaced.¹³ Men and boys are under-represented, having been targeted for killings, forced recruitment, forced disappearance and arbitrary detention, including by security forces and civilian vigilante groups.¹⁴ Women and girls have suffered and continue to face grave violations including forced marriage, sexual violence and exploitation. Over 2,000 women and girls have so far been abducted.¹⁵ The use of rape as a weapon of war is a common feature of this conflict, and thousands of women and girls have found themselves pregnant and subject to stigmatization by their communities as a result. Even within camps, displaced people remain at risk of abuse and exploitation. Rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation was reported in 50 percent of 26 IDP sites (camps and host locations) assessed by humanitarian agencies in Nigeria.¹⁶

Many areas remain insecure and fragile. Some people have returned prematurely, sometimes as a result of coercion or force, and have been subject to

renewed attacks, repeat displacement and loss of life. They have returned to find their communities, homes and local infrastructure destroyed.

//We went back to Madagali in March 2015 for six weeks. Everything had been destroyed. One day, while working on our farms we were attacked by the insurgents, about 10 people were killed and several injured. Most of us took refuge in the bush for three days. The insurgents stole our food and cattle and some people were captured including my wife and 25-year-old daughter, I couldn't do anything to save them. I had to come back to St Theresa Catholic Church. **Each day that passes I can't help but imagine what my family are going through. I wish we never went back.//**

Ouseini, 64, male IDP, St Theresa Catholic Church, Yola, Nigeria.

Insecurity and military operations in north-eastern Nigeria mean hundreds of thousands of people remain trapped by the conflict and are unable to access humanitarian assistance and protection. Humanitarian agencies are struggling to respond because of the ongoing fighting, and security restrictions such as roadblocks, checkpoints

and curfews. Newly accessible areas in north-east Nigeria can only be accessed through the use of armed escorts, which makes it difficult for many humanitarian agencies to provide assistance as being associated with the military may put staff and beneficiaries at risk.



Child playing at St Theresa Catholic Church, Yola, Nigeria. Photo: Ibrahim Dung/Oxfam

// I am a wife and mother of 11 children. We ran from Madagali about eight months ago when we were attacked by the insurgents. It was horrific. We walked for days in the bush until we got to Yola. I went back in May 2015 to give my mum some food. Since she was too old to run with us we had to leave her and my disabled daughter behind. I have been really worried about them and heard of the torture my mum was put through by the insurgents; she was beaten mercilessly, stripped naked and then left without food. **Madagali is still not safe to return to; there are no facilities there—everything has been destroyed. There is no clean water for drinking and other purposes, no health facilities, no schools for our children; in fact there is no life there.** It was so scary going back with the constant sounds of the guns. //

Christina, 40, female IDP, St Theresa Catholic Church camp, Yola, Nigeria

HOST COMMUNITIES UNDER PRESSURE

Over 80 percent of the people who have been displaced are seeking refuge among host communities who are themselves struggling to survive; they include relatives, friends or even strangers. As a result, some of the poorest people in the world have been sharing what meagre resources they have for over a year. They have little to offer, but what they have, they give. Consequently, these communities are becoming impoverished, multiplying the numbers already in need of assistance.

Even before the current crisis, the Lake Chad Basin region faced huge structural issues due to its long history of marginalization and chronic underdevelopment, illiteracy and youth unemployment.¹⁷ Climate change and unmanaged environmental degradation have been eroding the livelihoods of farmers and fishers. Water scarcity, hunger, malnutrition, a lack of access

to healthcare and education, as well as low levels of gender equality and women's empowerment are common features here.¹⁸ These socio-political issues have not only converged in the region, exacerbating the drivers of conflict, but they also serve to reduce the resilience and coping abilities of communities affected by it.



// There are now a lot of people in the village. For 19 months, refugees have been staying here. The villagers all welcomed foreigners into their homes, and there is no tension between them. There are 13,444 refugees in Gagamari. We deal with conflicts between the two communities through a village committee. For example, **during food distributions, some people take food from others. We help settle this kind of conflict.** //

Mamadou Abani, Municipal Councillor for Gagamari village, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam

In focus: Gagamari village in Niger hosts a large number of displaced people and refugees. Its inhabitants have welcomed entire families into their homes, jostling for space to carry on with everyday life. On a regular basis, fires break out in Gagamari, destroying the straw shelters and belongings of many families. Everybody lives in fear and nobody knows if these fires are caused by Boko Haram sympathizers or just unfortunate consequences of overcrowding and the extreme heat that affects the region.

Displacement is increasing pressure on host communities and leading to greater competition over basic services, water and food, and tension is being reported in some areas.¹⁹ The limited resources in these communities are being exhausted, forcing both host communities and the displaced to start taking risky and dangerous measures to meet their basic needs, such as

hawking, begging, child labour and transactional sex.²⁰ However, very little support is reaching these communities. Due to a combination of government policy and difficulties with access, humanitarian assistance has been largely concentrated on official camps, thereby frequently excluding displaced populations living in host communities.



// I am hosting the family of the village chief. There are ten of them who fled their home and are now living with me. There were already 11 people in my family living here. Boko Haram often attacks and kills people. The family has been living here for a year. They first fled to a different village, but it was impossible for them to stay there because of the lack of security. **Here we share everything. We eat together, we pray together, we share the water, the courtyard and our food.** The only problem of coexistence sometimes arises between children, but otherwise there is no tension. They will need to remain here as long as it takes until the situation stabilizes. //

Elhadjimi, 63, host, Toumour village, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam

THE STRUGGLE TO RESPOND

Overshadowed by governments' focus on political and military objectives, the magnitude of this unfolding humanitarian crisis goes woefully unseen and unaddressed. Across the four countries, 21 million people are affected by the conflict and 9.2 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

Hundreds of thousands of those affected cannot reach emergency life-saving assistance as a result of conflict and insecurity. This displacement crisis has hit one of the poorest and most fragile parts of the world, whose population already suffers from the region's chronic underdevelopment.

The Lake Chad Basin crisis is one of the most underfunded major crises in the world today. The scale and complexity of the crisis has been overlooked. This is reflected in the UN's 2016 humanitarian response plan for Nigeria, which sought only \$71 for each person in need (less than in other major crises, such as \$150 in Ethiopia or \$230 in Syria, though costs vary). However, as of July 2016, only 22 percent of the \$559m requested for the Lake Chad Basin humanitarian response has been received. With such little international support, the displaced communities and their local hosts therefore bear much of the responsibility alone.²¹

Many of the camps and informal displacement sites to which people have fled are overcrowded, do not meet international humanitarian standards for water, sanitation, hygiene and health provision, and have seen outbreaks of deadly diseases such as cholera.

// At first we thought this situation wouldn't last. That is why we haven't left the camp, but life in the camp is like prison life. Here we have nothing – not even toilets... people are defecating everywhere. //

Mohamad, male IDP, Kindjandi spontaneous displacement site, Niger

In north-east Nigeria, in Borno state, IDP camps in newly accessible areas are managed by the military, which is responsible for managing the camps and for distributing aid in the absence of the presence of civilian authorities.

The international community and the governments of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon were slow to recognize and acknowledge the scale of this crisis, and as a result, the humanitarian response has lacked capacity, coordination and funds. However, reports of high rates of deaths as a result of malnutrition and starvation, and warnings of a potential famine in July 2016, spurred some donor governments to recognize the need to scale up the response.²² In Nigeria the government has declared a food and nutrition crisis in Borno and this has also helped to mobilize attention and resources.

World leaders will meet on 19 and 20 September 2016 at two high level summits in New York to discuss how to share responsibility for refugees. IDPs, however, will receive hardly any attention. The Lake Chad Basin highlights why focusing only on displaced people who have crossed borders overlooks a large group of displaced people who have similar protection and assistance needs to refugees. While rich countries accept less than 20 percent of the world's refugees, they also give too little support to the world's poorest communities that provide the lion's share of support to refugees and displaced people.²³ Governments in the region and international donors need to think beyond military and political approaches and take urgent action to stop people's rapid decline into poverty and potential famine.

OXFAM'S RESPONSE

Oxfam is in Nigeria, Niger and Chad for the long haul, working to empower communities to rise out of poverty, address food shortages and limit the impact of disasters. In response to the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, we have been working with local partners to provide much needed water, sanitation, hygiene, food and livelihood support. We also provide specialist support to women and other vulnerable groups to address their specific needs. Since the start of the crisis, Oxfam has provided assistance to nearly 200,000 people and aims to reach over one million people by the end of 2017.



Farm Centre IDP camp is a government run camp in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, where over 13,000 IDP families live. It is a camp established by IDPs themselves when they moved in to empty unfinished buildings the government was building for government workers. There are also people living in makeshift shelters, especially people who have arrived more recently. Oxfam is providing water, latrines and sanitation activities in the camp. Photo: Ibrahim Dung/Oxfam



CONCLUSION

//The Lake Chad Basin, to my mind, at this stage, is the most under-reported and most underfunded and least addressed of the big crises we face.//

United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, 24 May 2016.²⁴

Millions of people remain unassisted. With both host and displaced communities exhausting their resources and falling deeper into poverty; with localized famine-like situations developing, and high mortality rates from malnutrition and disease; and with people at risk of neglect, violence and exploitation even within official camps, the humanitarian response needs to rapidly improve to save lives and protect those in need.

Military and political agendas have trumped humanitarian concerns; the affected governments and the international community alike have

underestimated and downplayed the crisis. A security approach alone will not provide a long-term solution to this crisis. The Lake Chad Basin has long suffered inequality, marginalization and underdevelopment, which have in turn bred conflict. To address this requires a comprehensive response from those working in the humanitarian, development and security sectors. As well as an urgent increase in the humanitarian response, attention must be paid to addressing the underlying drivers and root causes of the conflict.

Above: A young boy fetching water at the Farm Centre camp, Madugiri, Borno State, Nigeria. Photo: Ibrahim Dung/Oxfam

NOTES

All links last accessed July 2016, except where specified.

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LAST WORDS

Young girl, Sayam refugee camp, Diffa, Niger. Photo: Vincent Tremeau/Oxfam

// We planned to sleep in the jungle at night and return to our land during the day. Unfortunately it did not work and the market of Tchoukoudjani was attacked, they abducted people, burned houses. It's been a year since we fled, and now we will have to start over again. //

Madou, 48, male IDP, who was moving with his family from Kindjandi spontaneous site in Niger to a camp to try to access assistance

// We have been here for 13 months and will never return to our village. I was a wholesaler. I exported merchandise to Cameroon. I had a house and a car, but now we have nothing. //

Moustafa, 60, male refugee from Bama, Nigeria, now living in Gagamari village, Niger

// For now, I can't go home. But if peace comes, I hope we will return. //

Maikossai, 45, female refugee from Damassak, Nigeria, now living in Gagamari village, Niger

// I decided to go back to see things for myself. There were no schools, the water had been contaminated with dead bodies; only the elderly were living there. The daily sound of gunfire and bombs frightened me. We agreed that I would stay in Yola with the children since they have started school. It makes me very happy that they have their education after everything that's happened. We've been relying on the church for food and on organizations like Oxfam and ICRC. //

Brenda, 38, female IDP, St Theresa Catholic Church, Yola, Nigeria