

## **Responsive Economic Assistance to Conflict-affected Households (REACH)**

**Funded by USAID/ Food for Peace (FFP)**

**Fiscal Year 2016, Quarter 2 Report  
January 1 – March 31, 2016**



*Beneficiaries purchasing food with their e-voucher cards in Deba community of Yamaltu/Deba LGA.*

### **Project Summary:**

Award Number:  
**AID-FFP-G-15-00002**  
Start Date: October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
End Date: April 30, 2016  
Report Date: April 30, 2016  
Total Award: \$3,915,000

## I. Program Overview

The ongoing insecurity in northeast Nigeria caused by Boko Haram and the counter insurgency continues to create an urgent humanitarian situation in the country. According to the most recent published figures<sup>1</sup> 14.8 million people (out of a population of 15.2 million in the four (4) states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe) have been affected by the crisis in the North East of Nigeria caused by Boko Haram violence since it began in 2009.

The conflict has affected civilians already living in precarious conditions within the region. In the four most affected states, 7 million people including displaced, confined and hosted civilians are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Of these, 3.9 million are in need of food assistance and 874,607<sup>2</sup> are in urgent need as they will be unable to meet their basic food needs. With poor rains, lack of access to agricultural land and limited market access, food security and malnutrition are on the rise.

To address the ongoing situation of displaced and vulnerable resident households, the *Responsive Economic Assistance to Conflict-affected Households (REACH)* project continues to support food needs of both IDP and vulnerable host community members through monthly electronic voucher distributions.

## II. Quarter Executive Summary

The quarter under review witnessed slight fluctuations in numbers of IDPs, though remaining well above 2.2 million.<sup>3</sup> An estimated 2.5 million people are in urgent need of food assistance (both ‘crisis’ stage 3 and ‘emergency’ phase 4) and this number is expected to increase to 3 million. In addition, as the lean season gets underway, the number of people experiencing ‘emergency’ food insecurity is predicted to increase by over a third.<sup>4</sup> The most recent joint UN Multi-sector rapid assessment in North East Nigeria covering hard to reach and inaccessible areas shows preliminary findings of over 550,000 individuals in need of immediate food assistance.

Mercy Corps continues to deliver assistance as funded by the original REACH program and subsequent extension, and plans to expand its scope and reach with new funding from Food For Peace to address immediate needs in the states of Gombe and Borno.

## III. Security Context, Situation Overview and Operational Summary

*Security:* During the current quarter, Gombe State saw a relative improvement of security related to Boko Haram. However, several incidents involving Fulani herdsman occurred, including the kidnapping of a school-aged girl. Reports also indicate that burglary and carjacking are on the rise.

More than 200 insurgents were arrested in Adamawa during this quarter and the Nigerian army is reported to have made some progress against Boko Haram in areas of Borno State through airstrikes and ground offensives. However, suicide bombings and other violent attacks by suspected Boko Haram members remain a significant threat. Some 20 people were killed and 18 injured on 16 March in a coordinated attack by two female suicide bombers on a mosque on the outskirts of Maiduguri. Meanwhile, porous borders, insecurity in neighboring countries, growing extremism and forced displacement in the Lake Chad Basin add a regional dimension to the present humanitarian crisis and security situation which needs to be monitored closely to adapt operational measures necessary to ensure safety of beneficiaries and resources.

*Population movements:* Population movements in Nigeria are extremely fluid with more IDPs being identified, others relocating, and new ones continuing to be uprooted by the ongoing attacks. However, minimal movement (new displacement) was recorded within the quarter in Gombe State. According to the latest figures from OCHA, approximately 26,000 IDPs reside within Gombe State, an increase of 1,000 households from December 2015.<sup>5</sup> Households arrived in communities like Pantami, Kagarawal and Bajoga from Yobe and Borno States, due to insecurity.

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<sup>1</sup> 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Cadre Harmonise 2016

<sup>3</sup> Nigeria: Displacement – Humanitarian Snapshot as of 05 March 2016, OCHA

<sup>4</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin: Nigeria, Issue 11, March 2016

<sup>5</sup> Nigeria: Displacement – Humanitarian Snapshot as of 05 March 2016, OCHA

*Markets:* The closure of markets in Borno and Yobe States by the authorities to mitigate potential financial advantages to Boko Haram alongside other factors such as border closures and a drop in cereal supply in most markets are pushing up food prices in a region already facing food shortages due to the conflict. Given the relatively stable security situation in Gombe, basic commodities remain available in local markets. However, the impact of the increase in market prices following the devaluation of the Naira is certainly being felt in the communities of the North-East. Price data received from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on March 14, 2016 shows mostly stable staple food markets across the Northeast (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe) with an average price increase across staple food items (Rice, Beans, Sorghum and Millet) of 2.73%. Gombe saw the greatest food price increases with an average 13.45% increase.

In February, Mercy Corps staff coordinated with WFP to carry out a regional market assessment. The study assessed the market situation of the on-going crisis and subsequent market disruptions, comparing findings to previous market data. The main focus was on cereal, fish and livestock sector. Mercy Corps staff collected market data from three LGAs in southern Borno. The preliminary report was released in March 2016.<sup>6</sup>

*Operations:* During the quarter, Gombe-based teams focused on continuing support to vulnerable households in the form of food e-vouchers (FFP), NFI e-vouchers, and livelihood grants (OFDA), as well as conducting training on GBV and protection topics and working with communities to develop proposals for additional CFW projects. Mercy Corps also scaled up support to vulnerable IDP and host-community households through unconditional cash transfers, water point rehabilitation, and protection interventions in Adamawa State (ECHO-funded).

In addition, the Women’s Refugee Commission (OFDA-funded) and Mercy Corps collaborated to adapt and pilot the *I’m Here* Approach in northeast Nigeria (in Gombe, Adamawa and Borno States). *I’m Here* outlines a series of operational steps and complementary tools that, taken together, are designed to rapidly yield actionable information that practitioners can use to more effectively identify, protect, serve and engage adolescent girls. Results from the pilot will inform Mercy Corps programming and also generate operational and technical learning for OFDA and the humanitarian community.

*Humanitarian Coordination:* Mercy Corps continues to maintain an active role and contributes to all humanitarian coordination groups. At the Abuja level, ongoing participation within the sector working groups, HCT (*Humanitarian Country Team*) and INGO forum ensures collaboration at all levels with all stakeholders. At the state level, Mercy Corps continues to maintain bilateral relations with relevant parties and ensures participation in state working groups. Coordination with both SEMA (*State Emergency Management Agency*) and NEMA (*National Emergency Management Agency*) in Gombe and Adamawa as well as various LGA heads of office and other relevant stakeholders occurs through monthly reports following the signature of a memorandum of understanding with the State.

*Staff Development:* Humanitarian team staff members attended a number of trainings and workshops during the quarter covering topics such as gender mainstreaming/minimum standards, I’m Here/Girl Roster assessment methodology, data protection and information management, humanitarian access, monitoring and evaluation, and Red Rose systems.

**IV. Project Performance**

**Unconditional Cash Vouchers**

OBJECTIVE 1.1: 4,100 IDP and host households purchase nutritious food that meets the needs of all household members including women, adolescent girls and young children, using food vouchers			
INDICATORS	TARGET	PROGRESS	COMPLETION

<sup>6</sup> <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp282752.pdf>

<b>Indicator 1.1a:</b> # of recipients targeted and reached (disaggregated by sex and age: 6-23 months, 23-59 months, 5-18 years, and ≥18 years of age)	<b>Households:</b> 4,100 <b>Individuals:</b> 28,700	<b>Households:</b> 3,937 <b>Individuals:</b> 27,559	<b>100%</b>
Indicator 1.1b Actual cost per beneficiary sub-sectors activities	<b>9,600NGN</b> \$60	<b>9,600NGN</b> \$35 <sup>7</sup>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Main activities planned for Quarter</b>	<b>Progress during reporting period</b>		
<p><i>Food Assistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly transfer to e-cards</li> </ul> <p><i>Vouchers for work (VFW)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handover of completed community projects</li> <li>Payment of laborers' wages</li> <li>Selection of new CFW community projects, registration of beneficiaries, and procurement of materials</li> </ul> <p><i>Nutrition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued advocacy to UNICEF and state for provision of services to CMAM centers and identified cases</li> <li>Continued awareness-raising with mother support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 rounds of monthly transfers completed</li> <li>Vendor reimbursements processed</li> <li>Final payments to CFW laborers</li> <li>Communities submitted CFW project proposals for review and selection</li> <li>Teams worked with communities to select projects, register beneficiaries and initiate procurement process for materials and tools</li> <li>Facilitated referral of 4 malnourished children to CMAM centers as a result of increased awareness of mothers' groups</li> <li>Ongoing advocacy efforts to UNICEF and the State completed</li> </ul>		

### *Food Assistance*

During the months of January through March, three rounds of food top-ups to the electronic vouchers were processed (each with a value of 9,600 NGN). As shown in the below table, top-ups were discontinued once households received 12 rounds of support. The final top-up and redemption of food will take place in April for 1,046 households.

The table below illustrates the total target reached with the allocation of number of rounds.

<b>Rounds received through 12.31.15</b>	<b># of HH receiving top-ups</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>Rounds Remaining</b>
8 rounds	1,046	1	1	1	1
9 rounds	337	1	1	1	0
10 rounds	2,880	1 (2,549 active)	1 (2,549 active)	0	0
11 rounds	6	0	1 (5 active)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,269</b>	<b>3,932</b>	<b>3,937</b>	<b>1,383</b>	<b>1,046</b>

### *Vouchers for Work*

During the previous quarter, the implementation of 29 selected projects progressed with involvement from both IDP and host communities. The projects identified by the communities aimed both at restoring assets for the community and building a sense of engagement between both communities in the crisis. A total of 29 individual projects were implemented across all 12 communities, engaging a total of 376 laborers (301 unskilled / 75 skilled). Projects included community cleaning and sanitation, rural road rehabilitation, the construction and rehabilitation of drainage systems and refuse collectors, and the provision of waste containers.

<sup>7</sup> Exchange rate used as of 1 April 2015 is 276.5 NGN = 1 USD.

In the current quarter, final wage payments were made to CFW laborers. On the basis of cost savings in the REACH budget, plans were also made to implement additional community projects. Teams went back to communities to receive proposals for potential projects and register new beneficiaries. After the selection and approval of 20 projects (community cleaning and sanitation, creation of chairs for primary schools, rural road and drainage rehabilitation, and creation of waste collectors) in 13 communities within Funakaye, Gombe, and Yamaltu/Deba LGAs, beneficiary lists were finalized and the procurement process for required materials and tools was initiated. Approximately 164 laborers will be engaged. The projects will be carried out in April.

The table below illustrates the new CFW projects selected:

# of Projects	Communities	Project Type	Skilled Labor	Unskilled Labor	Days
7	Ashaka Gari, Ashaka Jalingo, Bajoga, Tongo, Pantami, Dadin Kowa, Hinna	Primary school chairs	70	42	6
1	Tunfure	Rural road rehab	2	10	7
5	Malan Inna, Nassarawo, FLC (Bubashango and Donkay), Deba	Refuse collector	15	15	4
1	Maikaho	Drainage / erosion control	5	5	7
6	Ashaka Gari, Ashaka Jalingo, Tongo, Bajoga, FLC, Maikaho	Community cleaning and sanitation	0	120	10

### Nutrition and Hygiene

Hygiene awareness and nutrition messaging continued to be delivered alongside the food assistance activities through the 20 established mother support groups in the 12 intervention communities.

- Continued Advocacy and Linkage Creation*

Advocacy efforts towards UNICEF and the state authorities are ongoing through coordination with the primary health care unit. The aim is to leverage previous efforts for the state to respond effectively to the treatment of severely malnourished children identified in all communities of intervention. Linkages through the mother support groups and community volunteers play an important role in delivering messages and providing referral network for CMAM cases.

- Identification of SAM Children and Referral*

The formation of the mother support groups in the communities is providing a good platform for continued sensitization on adequate feeding and choice of quality food consumption for households across all communities of intervention. Mercy Corps facilitated the referral of four severely malnourished children in Makaiho community to Nassarawo hospital.

### V. Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E activities conducted include post-distribution monitoring, market transaction monitoring, price monitoring, and recording and responding to community feedback.

The table below illustrates the number of monitoring activities conducted in the quarter under review.

Monitoring Activity	# of monitoring visits/surveys
Post-Distribution Monitoring	932
Market Transaction Monitoring	34

- Post-Distribution Monitoring*

Post distribution monitoring activities were conducted across all communities of intervention in order to ascertain the impact of the project on beneficiaries and to ensure

effective utilization. Monitoring activities were conducted door to door. Outcomes from the post-distribution monitoring indicate that most beneficiaries redeemed their e-vouchers immediately after the top-up was done. Participating households have noticed that commodity prices are increasing, but they are not purchasing additional food with their own funds while redeeming e-vouchers. Overall, beneficiaries find the e-voucher

distributions/redemptions organized and efficient. The most commonly mentioned needs are education, livelihoods and shelter.

• *Market Transaction Monitoring*

Monitoring activities are always conducted at each voucher redemption point, so as to ensure vendors’ compliance with agreements entered into with Mercy Corps with respect to the quality of goods sold to beneficiaries, non-exploitation of beneficiaries and not exchanging of voucher for cash. Market transaction monitoring ensures accountability and transparency in project implementation.

• *Price Surveys*

Mercy Corps conducts market price monitoring of food items within the communities on a monthly basis to evaluate the appropriate value of vouchers provided to the beneficiaries to meet their needs. During the quarter, food basket items continued to increase but the voucher value (96,000 NGN) still covered 100% of the Sphere standard diet adequacy.

• *Community Complaints and Feedback Mechanism*

The community feedback mechanism carried out through the use of the hotline, resulted in the compilation of categories of feedback including, but not limited to, technical issues arising from the use of the e-vouchers and electronic platform as well as requests for assistance in areas beyond food security. A total of 169 feedback communications were received for the quarter under review; Mercy Corps effectively addressed technical issues around electronic beneficiary cards. Community appreciation of the assistance provided, as well as its methodology, is also gathered through the feedback mechanism.

**V. Security**

In response to the security context described above, Mercy Corps’ security protocols are regularly revised in relation to risks and mitigation measures.

**VI. Challenges**

Generally, while the overall program implementation is on track and targets have been met, challenges are encountered including:

- Fuel shortages and increased fuel prices have caused delays with teams getting to the field for program implementation and monitoring.
- The ongoing lack of adequate IDP tracking in the humanitarian community in Nigeria creates difficulties in reporting accurate numbers and movement trends and presents a challenge in terms of advocacy for additional assistance to meet immediate needs.
- Weak and decentralized coordination efforts on the national and state levels produces a gap in the ability to share reliable information which defines needs, gaps and response.

**VII. Plans for next quarter**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Main activities</b>
<b>Food Assistance</b>	➢ Final e-voucher top up (12 <sup>th</sup> round for 1,046 households)
<b>Vouchers for Work</b>	➢ Procurement of materials and tools, project implementation and handover of all 20 projects to the communities
<b>Nutrition and Hygiene</b>	➢ Coordination and advocacy for referral pathway
<b>M &amp;E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ End of project monitoring</li> <li>➢ End of project report</li> </ul>