

Intense conflict limits food availability and access in regions bordering Lake Chad

Boko Haram conflict, which has spread from Nigeria to neighboring countries, continues to limit food availability and access for households in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Conflict is preventing households from pursuing their typical livelihoods. Increasing population displacements continue to put stress on host communities. February 2015 joint CILSS/National Governments/FEWS NET/FAO/WFP market assessments confirm that market activity remains disrupted in regions bordering Lake Chad. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, 3.5 – 4 million resident and displaced people throughout northeast Nigeria, the Diffa Region of Niger, western Chad, and northern Cameroon will face significant difficulty accessing adequate food through at least September 2015. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes, including increased levels of acute malnutrition, are expected over the coming six months for the worst affected households.

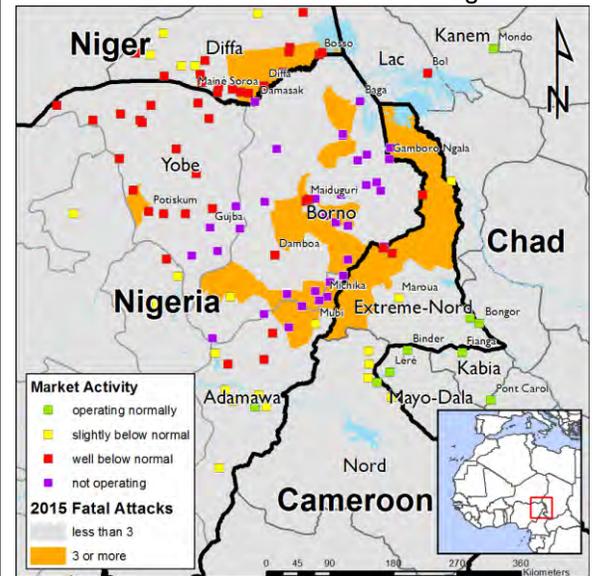
Frequent skirmishes between Boko Haram and the Multinational Joint Task Force have resulted in numerous casualties and continued population displacements. [As of February](#), the Nigerian Government and the International Organization for Migration had identified more than 1.1 million people displaced by conflict, more than half of whom are now in Borno State. In addition, approximately 200,000 people have fled to Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. In areas hosting IDPs and refugees, the resources of resident families are being strained. In Lac and western Kanem (Chad), for example, assistance from resident households to refugees has contributed to an early exhaustion of food stocks. More than half of households now rely on markets to meet their food needs, whereas in typical years only about a third of local households are doing so at this time.

Households have also been caught between the insurgents and military forces, particularly in northeast Nigeria, but also more recently in the Diffa Region of Niger, western Chad, and northern regions of Cameroon (Figure 1). Last year's harvests were below average in affected areas and, in many instances, insecurity is preventing households from participating in other means of accessing food, including dry season cultivation, fishing, and wage labor activities. Additionally, as conflict hinders herd movements in the region, pastoral resources, including grazing land and water points, are being exhausted much earlier than normal.

Cross-border cereal and livestock markets in the region are not functioning or are operating at levels well below normal (Figure 1). The joint assessment found maize prices on some affected markets to be as high as 50 percent above February 2014 levels and 80 percent above the five-year average. Market attacks by insurgents and traders' fears contribute to limited trade flows. On many markets available cereal supplies are insufficient to completely meet local market demand. Flows of cereals from surplus-producing areas of Nigeria to neighboring countries and flows of livestock and cash crops into Nigeria are equally affected. Cattle prices on Bol market on the Chadian side of Lake Chad are now 40 percent below the five-year average.

IDPs and resident households in areas of northeast Nigeria worst affected by conflict are the most food insecure. Recent screening data from IDP populations in greater Maiduguri suggest the prevalence of acute malnutrition is critical. In addition, focus group interviews suggest that IDP households in this area are consuming less than two food groups per day. Though data are limited, these results indicate that worst affected IDP households may currently be facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. Although somewhat less impacted by the conflict, displaced and resident households in other areas in northeast Nigeria and neighboring regions in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon also face significant difficulty meeting their basic food needs.

Figure 1. Week of March 16th, 2015 market activity and 2015 fatal attacks in the Lake Chad region



Conflict data source: [ACLED](#)
Market activity source: [FEWS NET](#)

In the absence of humanitarian assistance, between 3.5 and 4 million people in the regions bordering Lake Chad will reduce the quality of their diets and face difficulty accessing adequate food over the coming six months. The size of the Emergency (IPC Phase 4) population in northeast Nigeria is likely to grow, with food insecurity peaking in August. This inability to meet minimum food requirements is expected to result in increased levels of acute malnutrition among the worst affected households.

Boko Haram conflict will continue to limit trade and agriculture activities both in northeastern Nigerian and in neighboring regions in Niger, Chad and Cameroon. With Nigeria's federal and state elections scheduled for late March and April, related violence could contribute to increased insecurity in northeastern Nigeria. Urgent, well-targeted humanitarian assistance is needed to increase food availability and access and prevent continued food consumption gaps and associated increases in acute malnutrition.