Debriefing Note
Site Assessment for a Potential Site for the Humanitarian Hub and Common Storage Area in Gulak, Madagali, 21 to 23 February 2018

Background:

Adamawa state has the second highest number of displaced people across the current humanitarian crisis in the north-east. The majority of IDPs come from the northern part of the state, which was directly affected by conflict with, thousands more from the neighboring state of Borno. Many fled the violence from the southern parts of Borno and resettled into camps and host communities while others had initially crossed the border to Cameroon but were returned following a decision in July 2015 to expel refugees not resident in designated camps in that country.

In 2017, the Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator visited Adamawa State. The request for establishing a humanitarian hub was made to the Humanitarian Coordinator by the humanitarian partners during a field visit to Madagali.

The humanitarian partners expressed the need to consider establishing a humanitarian hub in Gulak, in Madagali in order to improve the quality of humanitarian response, support the further scale-up of services at LGA level and address the humanitarian needs of the internally-displaced population and refugees who are returning to the area from Cameroon.

In response, the Humanitarian Coordinator advised the humanitarian partners to liaise with the Hub Task force to discuss further the possible establishment of the humanitarian hub in Gulak. The Hub Task Force and the humanitarian actors working in Adamawa discussed and agreed to carry out a joint field assessment to examine the request for building a hub in Gulak, from 21 to 24 February 2018.

Composition of the Joint Field and Security Assessment

The participants to the joint field and security assessment are as follows:

1. State Government Representatives: Commissioner of the Ministry of Agriculture, Chairman of Madagali Local Government Area (LGA) and Local Authority Representatives

2. Hub Task Force from Maiduguri: Mr. Ibrahima Barry, OCHA Head of Field Coordination Unit based in Maiduguri and Head of the Humanitarian Hub Task Force; Samuel Falsis, IOM Humanitarian Hubs Project Coordinator; Basile Faye, IOM Security Officer; Yusuf Samlerumso, UNDSS Security Officer; and Emmanuel Peter, UNHRD Technician representing the Logistics Sector.


From 21 to 23 February the Hub Task Force had meetings with UNHCR, OCHA, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM, and INGOs/NGOs including IRC, Plan International, DRC, 2SF, Goggoji Zumunchi. All representatives from the above stakeholders reiterated their conviction for a humanitarian hub to be set up in Gulak. According to their analysis the suicide bombings and gunmen attacks have posed a serious security challenge for their humanitarian operations in Madagali as some of organizations had decided to suspend movements to the LGA. They believe that having a safe place to work as hub will certainly be a welcomed development.

The chairman of the Hub Task Force briefed the head of UNHAS (UN Humanitarian Air Service) about the outcomes of the field visit. Both agreed to hold a meeting for further discussion on the possibility to require for helicopter services in a bid to facilitate for humanitarian partners to reach Gulak on regular basis and ensure the delivery of lifesaving assistance in the settlements of Madagali LGA.

Activities Undertaken:

1. Meeting with partners NGO and UN agencies

The team met with the partner representatives composed of representatives of UN and NGOs (both national and international NGOs) who are operating in the area, at the office of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on 22 February 2018. Among the NGO represented were IRC, Plan International, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and two national NGOs, Sakat and Zadakat Foundation (ZSF) and IRN.

The team received a security briefing from the security officer of IRC. The briefing highlighted that Madagali, specifically Gulak has been relatively quiet and peaceful despite the general threats posed by the AOG operatives. Humanitarian agencies however cannot spend long time in implementing their activities in Madagali due to the absence of a safe accommodation in the area. Many of the humanitarian workers drive from Mubi at the start of the day and drive back to Mubi before the end of the day.

The humanitarian partners representatives expressed their need not only to have a safe accommodation and working area in Madagali but also a safe storage area where they may keep the relief items they distribute to the affected population.

The team explained to the partner representatives the concept and model of the humanitarian hubs and the common storage facility, highlighting the importance of their commitment to use the facilities in case the facilities will be constructed and put in place.

2. Meeting with the LGA – Madagali Officials

The Hub Task Force Team and some partner representatives drove to Gulak, Madagali and met with Mr. Yusuf Mohammad, LGA Chairman of Madagali, Waziri H. Ahmadu, Commissioner of Agriculture of Adamawa State and other officials and civil society leaders.

The LGA Chairman and the government officials articulated the needs of their constituents and their desire to see humanitarian organizations to be more actively involved in the provision of assistance to the IDPs and refugees returning from Cameroon. The LGA chairman , the Commissioner of
Agriculture of Adamawa State and Madagali authorities highlighted key issues that can be summarized as Food insecurity including lack of food and access to farms, Protection matters, WASH, Shelter, Health and Recovery Activities. They expressed interest in and support the establishment of a humanitarian hub and common storage facility in Gulak. They assured the team and the partner representatives of the LGA’s readiness to support the endeavor and assured the team of a government land that could potentially be used for the said purpose.

The Hub Task Force Team also explained to the LGA Chairman and the government officials the concept of the humanitarian hub and common storage facility. The hub Task Force underline the three main criteria to be considered for the prioritization of a location hosting a hubs as follows: Security, Humanitarian needs and Logistic aspects.

3. Site Visit to the Potential Site

Gulak town, the proposed hub site in Madagali LGA is located 300km north of Yola Town. The road from Yola Town, the state capital driving northwards is tarmac with intermittent potholes and with two major damaged bridges close to the LGA. Driving to Gulak is with great difficulties and it will take 6 hours to get to the hard to reach LGA. There are no static humanitarian actors in Gulak due to security related challenges. Humanitarian actors responding to the LGA are doing so from the Mubi Town which is approximately two and half hours’ drive to Gulak. These partners are thin on the ground and will spend most of their working hours commuting between Mubi Town and to the LGA.

The site proposed by LGA Chairman for the humanitarian hub and common storage area is a government land located not far from the LGA office (coordinates: 10° 48’ 45.26” N; 13° 27’ 30.02” E).

The property has a frontage of approximately 83 meters. The property is irregularly-shaped but the approximate frontage is 83 meters, its rear boundary is 55 meters and its length, 200 meters. It has 3 old and abandoned buildings which can be renovated and used as part of the humanitarian hub and an existing borehole. It was not ascertained however if the borehole still has water but in one of the buildings, there were pipes which may have been used in the borehole before.

Google Map Photo of the Site
The property can potentially accommodate the humanitarian hub, common storage facility and a helipad. It has a perimeter wall made of concrete hallow blocks which needs to be fixed and increased in height to make it compliant with the MOSS/MORSS requirement.

A potential constraint however which can be addressed with proper construction planning, is the approach to the property from the main road. The maid roan is very high and trucks going into and coming out of the common storage facilities may have some challenges negotiating. But this can be addressed by backfilling the side of the road to make the angle of approach to the common storage area more manageable.

4. Meeting with the Military Commander of Gulak

The LGA Chairman led the team to the detachment of the company of soldiers securing Gulak. The team met with Major L. Banam, the commanding officer of the company. Major Banam assured the team that the security condition of Gulak is stable.

The security officers in the team (Basile Faye and Yusof Samlerumso) outlined the security assistance that would be needed by the humanitarian hub and the common storage area to Major Banam who assured the Hub Task Force Team and the LGA Chairman of the readiness to cooperate and to help escalate requests to his superiors especially in response to the need expressed by the security officers in the team for the army to provide a platoon of soldiers to secure the area at the rear portion of the property where the hub and common storage would be located. Annex 1 contains the detailed assessment of the security officers who were part of the team.

**Recommendation:**

Considering the needs expressed by the humanitarian partner representatives and taking further into consideration the appeal of the LGA Chairman for the humanitarian organizations to be more actively involved in the provision of assistance to the IDPs and refugees returning from Cameroon, there is a need for the humanitarian hub and common storage facility to be established in Gulak. Both facilities will enable the humanitarian organizations operating in Madagali area, to provide more assistance to affected population in a much faster way. The humanitarian hub will allow humanitarian workers to have longer time to interact with the affected population since they would not have to hurry their schedule and to travel back to Mubi. In the same manner, the common storage facility will enable the humanitarian agencies to store their relief items in the facility, allowing better response time and ensuring more stable availability of the relief items that would be needed in the intervention. The facilities will give the humanitarian agencies a better chance of reaching to all the 11 wards of Madagali. The LGA has offered a property which can be suitable for the said facilities.

Considering the foregoing therefore, the Assessment Team recommends the establishment of a humanitarian hub and common storage facility in Gulak, Madagali, Adamawa State.

The UN staff members and their partners who will oversee the construction and operation of the humanitarian hub and common storage facilities are based in Maiduguri. On the other hand the
humanitarian partners stationed in Maiduguri provide humanitarian support activities to the North East including Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

Without a direct helicopter flight from Maiduguri to Gulak, humanitarian partners based in Maiduguri, staff members who will be involved in the construction and operation of the humanitarian hub and common storage facility will have to take the UNHAS flight from Maiduguri to Yola and drive approximately 6 hours to Gulak. To conduct a half a day monitoring/supervision visit to the facilities, staff members will have to spend almost 3 days of travel. However, Gulak can be reached by UNHAS helicopters from Maiduguri. Having helicopter support from Maiduguri therefore will greatly help during the construction period and the period to response lifesaving assistance to the hard to reach communities living in the surroundings of Sambisa Forest. The property provided by the LGA has the potential to accommodate a helipad.

Annex 1: UNDSS Mission Report to the Proposed Gulak Hub
Annex 2: Displacement Tracking Matrix Data of Madagali