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HIGHLIGHTS

- Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria seek US\$531 million to assist 5.2 million people.
- El Niño limited impact to date in West and Central Africa, but region remains at risk.
- Rising food insecurity and new LRA-related displacement in CAR.
- Lassa fever outbreak kills 120 in Nigeria and Benin.
- Upcoming elections in West and Central Africa.

Lake Chad Basin: nine million people need assistance

In the Lake Chad Basin, Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis is unfolding, threatening the lives and livelihoods of some 20 million people in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. A year-long surge in violence has forced thousands of families from their homes and deepened destitution among the displaced and the communities hosting them. Around 9.2 million people are already in need of humanitarian assistance.

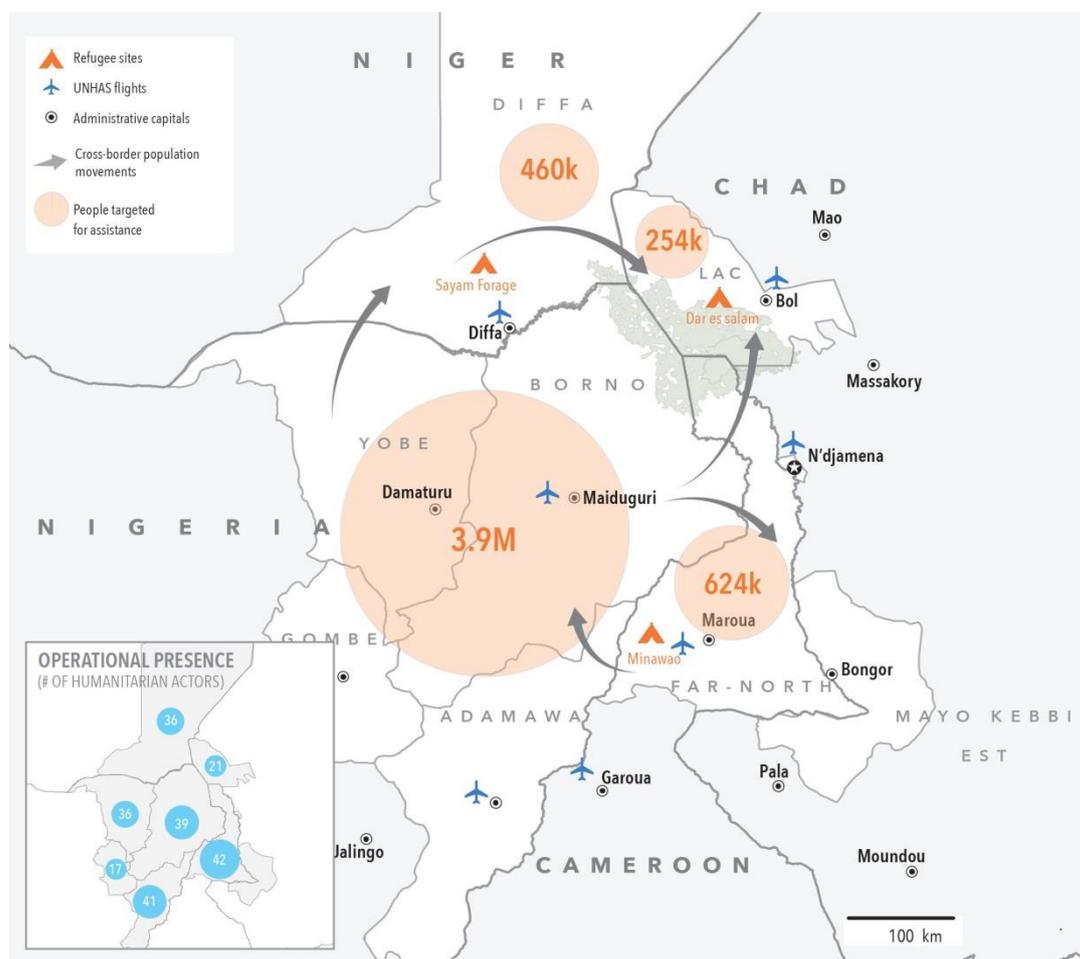
The protracted violence by Boko Haram and military operations against the armed group have displaced some 2.7 million people in the four countries. North-east Nigeria alone accounts for 2.2 million of the displaced. Around 4.4 million people in the conflict-affected

KEY FIGURES

# total people displaced in Lake Chad Basin	2.7M
# severely food insecure in Lake Chad Basin	4.4M
# people living in conflict-hit areas of the Lake Chad Basin	20M

SAHEL FUNDING

US\$1.9 billion requested in 2016
2% funded



The lives and livelihoods of some 20 million are threatened by Boko Haram, today's most deadly armed group.

region are severely food insecure with an estimated 223,000 severely acutely malnourished children.

Continuing displacement

In recent weeks, around 100,000 people in Niger's south-east Diffa region fled their homes in fear of attacks and sought shelter alongside the highway linking the capital Niamey to the east of the country.

A recent needs assessment identified tens of thousands of IDPs in Liwa and Daboua localities of Chad's eastern Lac region. The IDPs had not been registered before due to insecurity, limiting access to the host communities where they found refuge. The figures are currently being verified and are likely to double the current IDP population in the region, which stood at around 50,000.

Constrained access

The four Lake Chad Basin countries have upped military offensives against Boko Haram since early 2015. In north-eastern Nigeria, the armed group has lost much of the territory it held. However, it remains resilient and continues to carry out suicide attacks and armed raids.

Since the start of 2016, Cameroon's Far North region has been hit by more than 30 suicide attacks. Similarly in north-east Nigeria, the group continues to raid villages, target markets, mosques and towns with suicide bombings. Chad and Niger maintain a state of emergency in their respective conflict-affected regions.

Humanitarian access is restricted in certain localities of north-east Nigeria and the Far North region of Cameroon. In Chad, humanitarian organizations are able to deliver assistance on the axis between Baga Sola and Bol, which hosts the majority of registered IDPs. At the same time population movement, access to basic services as well as trade, farming and other daily livelihood activities have been constrained.

Niger on 31 January extended the state of emergency in Diffa, pointing out that the ongoing insecurity warranted the measure. Insecurity remains a major impediment to population movement, daily activities as well as humanitarian access.

Scaling up the response

Humanitarian partners have increased their presence in the affected areas, including Cameroon's Far North region, the Lac region in Chad, Diffa province in Niger, and north-eastern Nigeria.

In January, the four countries finalized their Humanitarian Response Plans seeking a total of US\$531 million to assist 5.2 million people in the areas affected by Boko Haram violence.

The Humanitarian Response Plans give priority to addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, providing refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local communities with protection assistance, shelter as well as improving access to basic services.

The Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP), also launched in January, aims to provide assistance to 230,000 Nigerian refugees and their host communities in the region.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund has allocated US\$31 million to bolster humanitarian response in the four Lake Chad Basin countries, with Nigeria receiving around US\$10 million, while Cameroon, Chad and Niger received some US\$7 million each.

Since the start of 2016, Cameroon's Far North region has been hit by more than 30 suicide attacks believed to be the work of Boko Haram.

El Niño in West and Central Africa

While many parts of Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa are in the grip of prolonged periods without rain and severe droughts, experts have so far observed only limited effects of the El Niño phenomenon on West and Central Africa. The region however, remains at risk and is highly vulnerable to potential El Niño effects.

Potential risks

In 1972, the dry climate brought on by El Niño brought a devastating drought in the Sahel. However, the 1982/83 and 1997/98 El Niño only had a moderate impact in the region. 2015 saw early season rainfall deficits with delays in planting and early crop development in the Sahel.

Subsequently, the suspected El Niño effect seems to have been counterbalanced by various oceanic and meteorological systems in the Atlantic resulting in a relatively good rainy season.

Impact on West Africa

Unusually high surface temperatures at the end of 2015 and in January 2016 could be a first indication that El Niño is beginning to impact West Africa. Average monthly temperatures in December and January in the Western coastal countries, including Guinea, Senegal and Mauritania, were around two degrees Celsius higher than average.

At the same time, the amount of rainfall in the Gulf of Guinea was below average, and is likely to remain low into March/April 2016 along the West African coast. The outlook for the first trimester 2016 also predicts moderately higher than normal temperatures in western parts of West Africa.

Impact on Central Africa

In Central Africa, rainfalls in the last trimester of 2015 have been unusually strong. Experts consider this could be an indirect impact of El Niño.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been particularly impacted with above average rains along the Congo River Basin and in Haut Uélé and South Kivu provinces. The rains and subsequent flooding have caused the destruction of thousands of homes, vital food stocks and crops, and public infrastructure, already affecting an estimated 382,000 people as of early January.

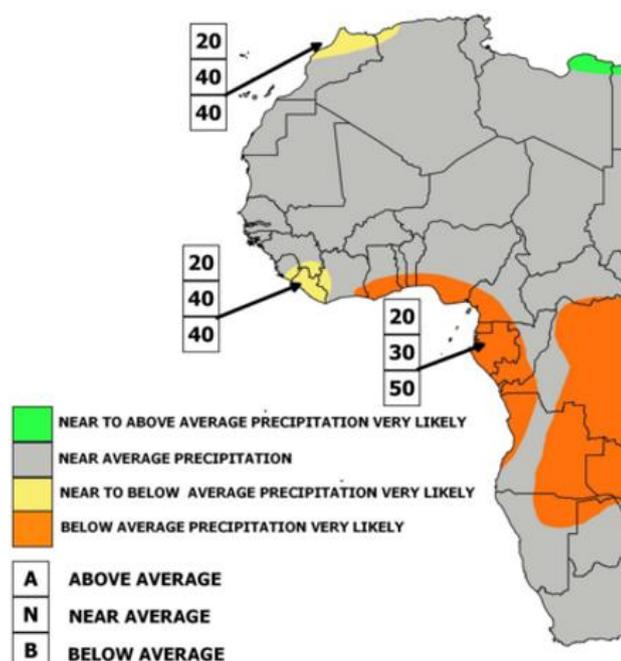
While the prevision for the first trimester expects below average rains in most of Central Africa, wet conditions in the affected parts of the DRC are likely to continue.

Sahel highly vulnerable

Even without adverse climate conditions, more than 23 million people across the Sahel belt will face food insecurity in 2016. Communities that are already in crisis, or still recovering from previous crises and rebuilding their fragile livelihoods will remain highly vulnerable to new climate-related shocks. Hence, any potential El Niño effects will be highly detrimental.

Unusually high surface temperatures are a first indication that El Niño is beginning to impact West Africa.

Many communities in the Sahel remain highly vulnerable to the potential effects of El Niño and changes in climate and rainfall patterns.



Seasonal Rain Forecast, February/March/April 2016. Source: Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA)

Humanitarian news in brief

Ebola resurfaces in Sierra Leone

On 14 January 2016, 60 days into the 90-day surveillance period, a new confirmed case of Ebola virus disease (EVD) was reported in Sierra Leone after a post-mortem swab was collected from a deceased 22-year-old woman tested positive for the virus. On 20 January, health authorities confirmed a second new case. The Inter-Agency Rapid Response Team responded to the flare-up at national and district level in support of the Government. The second patient had been released from hospital on 5 February, starting the 6-week countdown. As of 11 February all remaining contacts were released from quarantine. If no more cases are detected, the country will be declared Ebola-free for the second time on 17 March.

Following the flare-up, humanitarian partners in Guinea have reactivated border health screening and reinforced surveillance in Forécariah prefecture close to the border with Sierra Leone.

Sharp rise in food insecurity in CAR

In the Central African Republic, the number of people facing hunger has doubled in one year, reaching nearly 2.5 million or half the entire population, according to a recent assessment by the World Food Programme.

One in six people is struggling with severe or extreme food insecurity, while more than one in three are moderately food insecure. Conflict and insecurity have led to limited access to and availability of food. Food prices remain high after poor harvests in 2015. Many farmers had to abandon their land or were unable to tend their fields.

Continued food assistance to displaced families and returnees, food and technical assistance to farmers to recover, safety nets through programmes such as the school meals programme as well as providing support to rehabilitate the infrastructure through food-for-assets activities are urgently needed to alleviate the impact of food scarcity.



Gordil, Central African Republic, 21 January 2016. The number of hungry people has doubled in a one-year period, as conflict and insecurity have led to limited access to and availability of food. Credit: OCHA / Cortes

LRA attacks in south-east CAR

Increasing attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) gunmen in recent weeks have triggered population displacements in the south-eastern Haute-Kotto province. More than 3,000 people have fled their villages in the wake of raids, abductions and looting by LRA elements. Aid organizations are working to provide assistance and have called for improved security in the region.

Lassa outbreaks in Nigeria and Benin, monkeypox in CAR, meningitis in Togo and Ghana

As of 6 February, over 100 fatalities were reported in Nigeria since August 2015, following an outbreak of Lassa fever across 19 of the country's 36 states. The federal government banned the burial of victims' bodies by their families as part of efforts to contain the spread of the haemorrhagic fever.

In neighbouring Benin as of mid-February, 59 suspected cases including 20 deaths had been reported. The disease was first detected on 5 January following the death of a patient at a hospital in the central Tchaourou locality. Among other prevention measures, the Government and health partners are registering contacts, setting up isolation units and stocking up on medication and equipment.

The number of people facing hunger in CAR has doubled in one year, reaching nearly 2.5 million - half the entire population.

Over 100 fatalities were reported in Nigeria following an outbreak of Lassa fever across 19 of the country's 36 states.

In Ghana, an ongoing meningitis outbreak has caused 85 deaths and in Togo the outbreak in the northern Kara region has killed 13 people, with 162 cases reported. Measures to strengthen treatment capacity, provide medical supplies, and sensitize on preventive measures are underway.

On 11 January, 11 cases of Monkeypox, an extremely contagious viral disease, were confirmed in the Bangassou area in the southern Mbomou Province of Central African Republic. Health authorities and humanitarian partners are implementing control measures that include isolation of suspected patients, public sensitization and the activation of a regional taskforce on outbreaks.

GECEAO Executive Board Meeting

On 28 January, the Regional Committee for Disaster Management in West Africa (GECEAO) Executive Board committee met in Dakar, Senegal, to review priority activities agreed upon during the annual consultation of 2015 held in Abidjan and to identify key areas of focus for this year's annual consultation.



Dakar, 28 January 2016. GECEAO Executive Board committee discussion on priority activities for 2016 consultation. Credit: OCHA / Brandau

The event also provided an opportunity to identify together with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States Commission steps and measures necessary to support the implementation of the national disaster management agency model as validated by the High Level Ministerial meeting held in Accra in October 2015. Guinea Bissau will host the next annual consultation at the end of April 2016.

Upcoming elections

Benin

A **presidential election will be held on 6 March**. Current President Thomas Boni Yayi is to step down after two terms in power. The elections were initially scheduled for 28 February but have been postponed due to delays in the distribution of voter cards.

Chad

The country will hold a **presidential election on 10 April**, with a second round, if necessary, set for 9 May. President Idriss Deby, who has been in power since 1990, is seeking re-election. Candidates have up to 29 February to submit applications to run for the presidency. The opposition boycotted the last poll in 2011 and Deby was declared the winner.

Niger

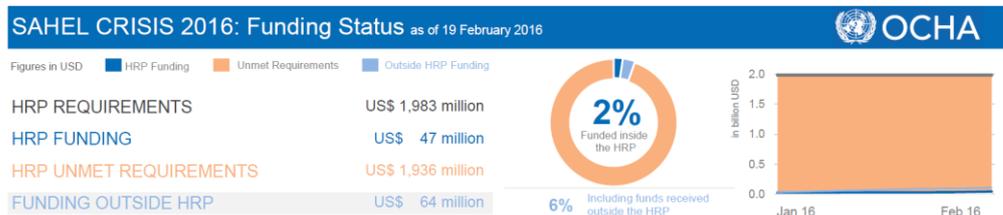
Voters in Niger went to the **polls on 21 February** to elect a new leader and parliament. Incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou, who came to power in 2011, is standing for re-election and more than a dozen candidates are seeking to challenge him. A run-off vote is scheduled for 20 March.

Republic of Congo

President Denis Sassou Nguesso has declared his candidature for the **20 March elections**. Presidential term limits were abolished following a constitutional referendum in October 2015. The incumbent leader has ruled Congo for 31 of the past 36 years.

Sahel Funding Status Overview

2016 Sahel Appeal funded at 2 per cent



The 2016 Sahel Humanitarian Strategic Response Plan was launched on 9 December 2015. The appeal calls for US\$1.983 billion to provide vital assistance to millions of people affected by crises in nine countries across the region.

As of 19 February, the Response Plan had received \$47 million, representing 2 per cent of the year's requirements. In addition, funding to humanitarian activities recorded outside the Response Plan was at \$64 million.

To date, two months after the Plan was released, Niger and Nigeria are the best funded appeals, and Senegal, The Gambia and Mauritania the least funded, having not received any of their requirements. Most funded sectors are Food Security, Multisector and Nutrition.