

BACKGROUND PAPER ON THE PREVENTION OF CATASTROPHIC FOOD SECURITY CONDITIONS IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

A. INTRODUCTION

North-east Nigeria has reached alarming levels of food insecurity and hunger after 11 years of conflict. The most recent Cadre Harmonisé (CH) (March 2021) indicates that up to 4.4 million people in north-east Nigeria's Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States will require food assistance during the lean season (June-August 2021)¹. The projected number of acutely food-insecure people has increased, as compared to the 2020 peak of the lean season that included the effects of COVID-19 on food insecurity. This is the highest number of food insecure people in the BAY states since March 2017. About 775,000 people will face emergency (IPC Phase 4) during the 2021 lean season, which is an 84% and 16% increase compared to 2019 and 2020 figures. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) acute malnutrition analysis (IPC AMN) of March 2021, the number of acutely malnourished children and women is expected to significantly increase during the lean season in 2021 with some 1.15 million children and above 124,000 women projected to be acutely malnourished. This will be the highest levels of women and children at risk since 2017, when the crisis was at its peak. According to the IPC AMN, over three-quarter (75%) of all local government areas (LGAs) are projected to be classified as critical (phase 4) or serious (Phase 3).

Humanitarian access and the security situation has continued to deteriorate over the last two years, affecting cargo movements along the main roads. Four LGAs are now completely inaccessible, as compared to only two in 2018. Another 15 LGAs are only partially accessible. Deteriorating security has an adverse impact on the food and nutrition status of the population in these locations in terms of their ability to grow and distribute food and the ability of humanitarian partners to provide agriculture based livelihoods, food and nutrition assistance. It is estimated that at least one million people are living in inaccessible areas.² Based on estimates, at least 880,000 people currently residing in inaccessible areas are food insecure, with some famine-like consumption patterns prevailing for a small minority of people (<10%). Information for higher-level indicators (acute malnutrition, mortality) were insufficient to confirm such conditions. In addition to life-saving emergency assistance, agricultural livelihood interventions are also urgently required to protect livelihoods (including productive assets at risk) and build resilience against shocks, as well as complementing other forms of assistance

The 2021 HRP is seeking \$1 billion to support 6.4 million people with a broad range of interventions. Of the 2021 HRP financial requirements, \$695.1 million or 70 percent are for food, nutrition, health, WASH and logistics support. In order to avert catastrophic worsening of food insecurity and livelihoods deterioration, \$250 million is urgently required for agricultural-based livelihoods, nutrition, health, WASH, logistics and enabling support as part of the HRP.

B. STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

To enable partners address the food insecurity situation and to avoid the situation further deteriorating, leading to extreme levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, an in-country taskforce composed of key managers from WFP, FAO, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and OCHA with relevant sectors, operational NGO partners (ACF, CRS, Save the Children, CARE) and UN agencies (as required) is being established. This will address strategic issues (advocacy and operational) under the guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The state level response will be guided by the Inter- Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) and supported by appropriate Rapid Response Mechanisms (RRM) and/or area-based operational teams for food and nutrition assistance. These teams will also tackle issues related to logistics, the volume of assistance, targeting, speed of delivery and access to affected people, while ensuring that all activities conform to best

¹ The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) is the unified tool for consensual analysis of acute food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel and West African region.

² Overall, at least 29% of BAY states LGAs are either inaccessible or partially inaccessible, with a significant majority in Borno State. Without unfettered humanitarian access, people living in these areas are at elevated risk of potentially catastrophic food and nutrition insecurity.

practices in terms of accountability to affected people, gender, age and disability concerns. To enable holistic response, the food and nutrition response will be done jointly with WASH, health and protection interventions.

WASH: The WASH Sector will triangulate WASH information with early warning systems (EWARS) to target Accessible and Hard to Reach Areas for robust surveillance, outbreak investigations, and interventions for WASH related disease outbreaks including cholera prevention and control. Preparedness efforts in terms of coordination, capacity building (mass messaging & training of volunteers), and prepositioning of critical WASH supplies and materials for use and construction of WASH infrastructure respectively will be strengthened. Community engagement and sensitization will be paramount to avert any disease outbreak. WASH and Health outreach workers' capacity will be strengthened including monitoring and field level communication.

Health: In the Hard to Reach and accessible Areas, the Health Sector will develop and/or scale up solutions addressing the fundamental drivers of malnutrition, including frequent common childhood illnesses like measles, diarrhea, cholera and malaria. Special attention will be given to recurrent infections, gaps in nutritious intake of food and weather-related shocks. The increased incidences of Malaria as well as the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic exerts more demand on an already stretched service and will be closely monitored. This is significantly so during the rainy season (that coincides with the lean season) with the associated deaths (7-11 times higher) due to suboptimal services (blood transfusion, oxygen therapy etc.) in many of the health centres in the affected communities.

Protection sector will reinforce systems of monitoring IDPs in reception and screening centres especially those who have recently arrived from inaccessible and hard to reach areas. The sector will seek to improve the protection, dignity and wellbeing of IDP's through the development and implementation of community-based Protection Monitoring activities, Protection by presence and Monitoring in targeted affected LGAs. Activities will include: sensitization and aware-raising campaigns, vulnerability profiling/screening, in-kind assistance to vulnerable affected communities, provision of Core-relief items and post-distribution monitoring (PDM). Family tracing and reunification for women and children, abducted or separated from families due to displacement, increase of activities for women and children at the respective friendly spaces, by adding educational and vocational programs for women and children. The sector will also advise on mine awareness in areas identified for small scale agricultural livelihood activities.

C. OUTLINE OF ACTION

To ensure effective response to the people at risk of worsening food insecurity in the BAY states, the strategy adopts a diversified approach that has at its core levels of accessibility.

1) Inaccessible areas: Includes areas that are currently fully and partially inaccessible, with no humanitarian access to provide assistance and mainly in CH Phase 4, with some famine-like consumption patterns prevailing for a small minority of people (<10%). The March 2021 Cadre Harmonise exercise analyzed nineteen totally/partially inaccessible LGAs³. The findings from the analysis showed severe consumption deficits and extremely limited or an absence of basic social services like health, WASH, education, and shelter in these areas.

2) Hard to reach areas: These locations are geographic hotspots prone to climate shocks, seasonal access issues, highly prone to insecurity hence becoming intermittently accessible. They are characterized by having either no or extremely little land for livelihoods activities and food production. This confluence of factors contributes to hotspot areas being categorized as either CH Emergency Phase (4): those that require urgent assistance to save lives or a few in Phase (3): those that require reducing food consumption gaps and protecting livelihoods such as livestock. These include some of the garrison towns, which become inaccessible in event of

³ Inaccessible and partially inaccessible areas comprising 16 in Borno State (Abadam, Marte, Gubio, Mobbar, Damboa, Askira Uba, Bama, Dikwa, Guamala, Konduga, Kukawa, Mafa, Magumeri, Monguno, and Nganzai); 2 in Yobe State (Gujiba and Geidam) and 1 in Adamawa State (Madagali)

conflict. Despite the insecurity and sporadic access challenges, these areas are prone to receiving new arrivals. These are the areas where RRM will focus more on.

3) **Accessible areas:** Includes areas with LGAs that are largely in CH Phase 3 and humanitarian actors have relative access. These include some of the more stable garrison towns. These LGAs also have relative access to land for agriculture including livestock production and relatively low levels of insecurity/conflict as compared to the Hard to Reach and Inaccessible Areas. These are subject to receive people migrating from other areas and therefore increase of humanitarian assistance needs. These areas require close monitoring, contingency planning/ response preparedness, and urgent need to scale-up the provision of assistance to reduce consumption gaps and protect livelihoods⁴.

Joint programming approaches per area (Immediate response actions)

a) Inaccessible areas

- **Assistance modalities:** It is highly unlikely that humanitarian partners will be able to provide assistance in inaccessible areas within the next 3- 6 months due to: 1) The NSAGs are actively targeting humanitarian workers and would not permit assistance; 2) The GON has concerns about any support being provided to NSAGs; and 3) donors may restrict support due –to anti-terrorism legislation. The taskforce will continue its advocacy using all available channels to enable people who are trapped in these areas to come out and access assistance where humanitarian actors can reach them.
- **Contingency Planning and Preparedness:**
 - **Preposition emergency food and nutrition stock in adjacent accessible locations of arrival** (Hard to Reach and Accessible) for people migrating from inaccessible locations. Strengthening the reception centres to enhance the response to new arrivals and streamline the referral mechanisms for both SAM and MAM treatment layering in buffer stock and/or wet feeding.
- **Monitoring:**
 - Strengthen regular food and nutrition security monitoring to provide analysis on the situation in the inaccessible areas and LGAs of arrival, as part of the early warning system, including expansion of documentation and MUAC screening of new arrivals in informal camps.
 - Use of remote sensing and satellite imagery (WFP HQ&ESRI) for real-time monitoring and tracking of famine - like conditions including population movements, settlement shifts, crop evolution as proxies for stress detection.

b) Hard to Reach.

- **Scaling Up the Rapid Response Mechanism:** Humanitarian actors will scale up delivery of humanitarian assistance through an inter-sectoral Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). This will enhance an agile emergency response with life-saving interventions. Applying the No-regrets approach to ensure that the right beneficiary receives the right assistance, the inter-sectoral area based RRM will monitor commodity pipeline and support prepositioning and mobile Rapid Response Teams.
- **Localization strategy.** Make deliberate efforts to enhance local capacity and skills to respond targeting Cooperating Partners (CPs), government and community first responders. It may be possible to use the humanitarian hubs or other locations as humanitarian staging facilities for

⁴ Among the Accessible LGAs include Askira Uba, kwayakusar, Shani, Hawul, Bayo, Biu in Borno State. In Yobe State include Fika, Yunusari, Potiskum, Fune, Gulani and Jakusko among others. Adamawa include Michika and Mayo

training. The aim will be to empower partners' locally recruited staff and volunteers to implement a response with support of the rapid response teams (RRT).

- **Enhanced coordination with government-led efforts:** Ensure government involvement and leadership in all stages and link with existing government policies and frameworks to enhance response whenever possible. The government is able to reach some areas that are off limits to the rest of the humanitarian community. The response will capitalize on government mandate and geographical reach to provide food assistance in deep-field locations.

c) **Accessible Areas**

- **Scale-up:** Scaling-up of food and nutrition assistance to meet the increased number of food insecure people. This includes the integration of acute malnutrition treatment in the existing public health system.
- **Emergency agricultural livelihood support:** Immediate support to sustain local production and income generation in areas of crop, livestock, fisheries, vegetables gardening, planting of short-season, high nutrient/value crops, restocking of livestock/poultry/aquaculture, and value addition.

D. STRENGTHENING ENABLERS

The humanitarian community has been relying on UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and the Humanitarian Hubs to reach the garrison towns and secure accommodation in deep field locations for sustained presence. These enablers alongside logistical support through accessible roads are required to support the planned joint response.

Road Transport and Warehousing

Creation of a buffer stocks in the three Hubs serving the emergency (Kano, Damaturu and Maiduguri) will be necessary. WFP team has prepared a flexible strategy that allows shipments from any of WFP's warehouses into those locations. A monthly buffer stock for beneficiaries in high risk locations (those in phase 4), will allow operational flexibility to choose the hub with better access.

Air Transport (UNHAS)

Access to many areas has become severely constrained, and the only way for aid workers to safely reach these areas is via the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). These services have capacity limitations, as well as funding challenges, meaning that only limited numbers of staff are able to travel to the various bases of the operation. Therefore, there is an urgent need for resources to ensure full operation of UNHAS. In addition, the response will explore the use of bigger aircrafts (IL-76) to augment the existing cargo capacity of UNHAS in areas where road transport is hampered by insecurity and/or compromised infrastructure

Humanitarian Hubs

The Humanitarian Hubs enable operations by keeping staff safe in deep field locations. Given the deteriorating security situation, the need to ensure that the Humanitarian Hubs run at full capacity cannot be over-emphasised. Some of the hubs require security upgrades which calls for reliable and predictable funding.

E. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

SECTOR	IMMEDIATE (LEAN SEASON) 6 MONTHS REQUIREMENTS IN \$	2021 HRP REQUIREMENTS IN \$
Food security	180 million	354 million
Nutrition	15 million	129 million
Health	18 million	83.7 million

WASH	15 million	92.7 million
Protection	915,000	
Logistics (including UNHAS)	16 million	30.7 million
Humanitarian Hubs	5 million	5 million
TOTAL	250 million	695.1 million

F. ANNEX: Supporting documents and infographics

1. Advocacy Plan
2. Map of inaccessible areas overlaid with food classification phases, and # of PIN to reach
3. Operational Plan

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