



North East Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa & Yobe) COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Guidance Notes

Agricultural Livelihoods Taskforce Guidance Notes (01 April 2020)

Background

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. In the current situation where COVID-19 is rapidly spreading worldwide, and with the number of cases rising with increasing pace in several affected countries, there is a need for immediate targeted action.

Nigeria confirmed its first case on 27th February 2020. Since then, the number of confirmed cases has been increasing. By the morning of March 29th, 2020, the total confirmed cases within Nigeria had risen to ninety-seven.

As of March 30, 2020, no case had been confirmed in the North Eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY). However, the North-Eastern Nigeria is highly endemic to diarrheal and other diseases (malaria, measles, Lassa fever, Meningitis, Hep E) with limited access to health services, and chronic underdevelopment compounded by poverty and years of conflict and displacement. The lack of adequate potable water and sanitation infrastructure coupled with extreme flooding has seen cholera among other cases rise every rainy season, while the protracted conflict has kept IDPs in overcrowded camps and overstretched the little resources and infrastructure in host community. This heightens the risk and potential negative impact of the COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods activities which are already significantly affected by restrictions of fertilizer movements, limited access to land for crop production and grazing.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food Security Sector Partners will work with other sectors and government structures for a coordinated multi-sectoral response, to sustain and protect the livelihoods of food insecure households during this period.

This document does not summarily exhaust solutions or recommendations. However, it is a guidance note that has been drafted in relation to the specific context of the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states of the North East Nigeria, in consultation with Agricultural Taskforce members including various government agencies and non-government organizations through teleconference calls on April 01, 2020. The document will also be regularly updated as the context evolves.

How the covid-19 threat may impact the FSS Agricultural Livelihoods?

Restrictions on inter-state movements will affect market operations for agricultural livelihoods inputs. This will be compounded further by the reduced farmer movements and field presence of extension workers, given that the majority are now working from home. Therefore, there is a high likelihood that the upcoming agricultural season may be interrupted.

It is also expected that agricultural input providers such as seed companies may not be operating at full capacity, and most likely be affected due to the current restriction of movements and related challenges. As a result of this, some partners have reduced their target numbers (some up to 50%) given the likelihood of not being able to meet the needs of all farmers as per original targets planned.

Borno state specifically was already facing significant challenges of insecurity, limiting access to land by the farmers. COVID-19 threats further make the situation worse in event that restrictions in movements are in place.

There is a risk of completely losing relatively new livelihoods activities or investments where beneficiaries/livelihoods activities that had not stabilized getting affected, especially if necessary support such as community workers, financial service providers, etc will not have access to provide mentorships and required technical support for sustainability. Majority of the farm activities are not insured either thereby not providing an option to cover some of these risks.

Post-harvest handling especially for fresh produce such as vegetables, fish, etc will become more complicated in event that restriction of movements or markets is in place, or if relevant stakeholders such as traders and transporters reduce activities as a result of fear of contraction of the disease, leading to food loss.

What practical precautionary measures should be done by partners to ensure safety of stakeholders especially beneficiaries, volunteers and staff?

Partners have recommended temporarily stopping Public Works or Community-Based livelihoods activities due to the relatively large numbers of participants required at a time for them to take place. However, partners have recommended strengthening and supporting of Household/individual based livelihoods activities since they do not bring together large numbers of people. For instance, backyard gardening, small-sale poultry, etc

Partners recommended any form of waivers or subsidies to farmers during this time from the government would be helpful as it is anticipated that prices of inputs may rise.

All measures to ensure social distancing, hygiene and SENSITIZATION should be emphasized at this time. For instance, one partner mentioned that they have continued with some livelihood's trainings, however with precaution where they had to reduce the numbers per session and included handwashing measures in place. However, this took 10 days instead of the expected 7 days. **SENSITIZATION** on COVID-19 came out as key and a priority given the reports in some locations some communities not aware about COVID-19 preventative measures.

Key points for advocacy and other recommendations

Partners will hope that the points 39 and 43 in the presidential speech will guarantee access to humanitarian support to the affected communities as required.

Partners also emphasized the need to upgrade and strengthen the Food Security Sector meetings in Yobe and Adamawa states given that those are the areas where agricultural livelihoods activities are predominantly implemented. This will ensure that the government and non-government actors are coordinated and going forward with joint sensitization and mobilization. This will also strengthen the facilitation of joint solutions during this time.

Partners also recommended early procurement and distribution of agricultural livelihoods inputs especially for household level livelihoods support, given that it will take a little longer this time round to get the inputs prepositioned especially with the restrictions.

Public Works/Community-Based activities be postponed. However, household/individual-based activities can still go ahead. Partners further also recommended that previous activities that were being implemented in groups should have them sub-divided for now going forward. For instance, if the group worked on a huge chunk of land as a unit, the land should be temporarily sub-divided to ensure 'social distancing' is enforced, and individual household members can work on the land separately. Partners have encouraged the implementation of household or individual level activities such as backyard gardening which do not expose many people.

With the reduced foot-print, partners also mentioned the need to strengthen the feedback mechanism and monitoring of cross-cutting issues that may come along.

In areas where farmers saved seed from the previous season, they should be encouraged to reserve them for planting given that access to additional seed this season may be difficult. This is one of the ways community capacity can be strengthened.

Partners implementing livelihoods interventions agreed that in event that there is an outbreak, they would be willing to join the main emergency response to provide relief to save lives when required.

Assess the needs and potential effect of the COVID-19 threat on the livestock keepers especially while including the nomadic pastoralists.

Taskforce partners: MoANR, FAO, WFP, UNDP, IDS, Mercy Corps, CRS, Action Against Hunger, NRC, DRC, DHCBI, GREENCODE, COOPI, NEMA