European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Nigeria

Introduction

There are 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in north-east Nigeria. Since the start of the fighting between non-state armed groups and the Nigerian army in 2009, more than 36,000 people have been killed, and thousands of women and girls have been abducted. There is widespread forced displacement and violations of international humanitarian law.

What are the needs?

In Africa’s most populous country, more than 47% of the population lives in extreme poverty. In Borno state in the north-east, the conflict continues to uproot civilians. The majority of people who had to flee for safety live in makeshift settlements or highly congested camps and rely mostly on the support of local communities, authorities, and humanitarian organisations. Overcrowding brings with it lack of access to basic services, cyclical epidemic outbreaks, rampant fires, and an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

An increase in violence caused 160,000 people to flee their home in 2019. Food availability is deteriorating, with 50% of households in Borno state at risk of not having enough food to eat. Nutrition monitoring in Borno state shows that there has been a steady increase of acute malnutrition cases in children since 2017. The food and nutritional situation could potentially deteriorate if sustained humanitarian assistance is not provided.

Humanitarian aid workers in north-east Nigeria continue to put their life on the line to deliver life-saving assistance to those who need it, in keeping with the humanitarian principles. In 2019, 12 humanitarian workers were executed by non-state armed groups and there were frequent security incidents against humanitarians.

Communities in north-west Nigeria face dire living conditions due to a surge in attacks in 2019 from groups in the region. It drove 42,000 Nigerians to seek refuge in Niger and a further 200,000 to look for safety elsewhere in Nigeria. The level of severe child malnutrition in the area is at emergency levels.

FACTS & FIGURES

In the 3 north-east states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe:

- 1.8 million forcibly displaced Nigerians; around 1.6 million returnees (IOM, Nov 2019)
- 1.2 million people cut off from assistance (UNOCHA)
- 2.9 million people face food shortages in northeast Nigeria (Cadre Harmonisé, October 2019)

EU humanitarian funding:
- €26.5 million in 2020
- Close to €271.5 million since 2014
How are we helping?

The European Union is one of the leading contributors of humanitarian aid in Nigeria. It provides immediate assistance to cover the basic needs of the most vulnerable internally displaced people and host communities in the country, and of refugees in other countries affected by the conflict in Nigeria, namely Chad (Lake region), Niger (Diffa region), and Cameroon (Far North region). Since 2014, the EU has allocated almost €271.5 million to help people in need in Nigeria, including the €26.5 million in initial funding provided in 2020.

EU humanitarian aid helps to meet the basic needs of the conflict-affected people by supporting emergency food aid, shelter, access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation, and basic primary healthcare. The EU currently funds food assistance in the form of cash transfers, vouchers and food rations for families, ready-to-use therapeutic food, and essential medicines to treat severely malnourished children.

Support from the EU also equips healthcare centres with water and hygiene systems, provides training for staff, and ensures screening for children who are at risk of malnutrition. The EU also supports actions that give children trapped in humanitarian crises a basic education alongside essential school supplies.

Given the special protection needs of women and children that arise in conflict situations, apposite community-based services receive EU funding to provide the necessary psychosocial support and referral services to unaccompanied children, victims of gender-based violence, and to help former child soldiers released from armed groups to reintegrate in society. In order to facilitate humanitarian access to people in need, the EU supports the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) that enables aid workers to reach isolated areas.

The EU also supports disaster risk reduction initiatives in disaster-prone areas in Nigeria. These help vulnerable people better prepare for and reduce the impact of recurring natural disasters, such as epidemics and floods. Through these projects, essential information about risks and prevention is shared with communities and consequently, this strengthens the local response through planning and preventive actions.

Beyond trying to meet immediate humanitarian needs, joint efforts with development partners are required to help build long-term resilience. Nigeria is an EU pilot country for projects bringing together humanitarian, development and peace-building dimensions to address the needs of vulnerable people, and offer them social protection through a more long-term and holistic approach.

Through its development assistance, the EU aims to build long-term resilience in conflict-affected communities by addressing the underlying causes of violent conflict, supporting basic services and helping people to support themselves. As part of its projects supporting development, the EU funds programmes on education and on helping people become independent of humanitarian assistance.