

# Lake Chad Basin



OCHA

SEPT 2015



Photo: OCHA/Brandau

## HUMANITARIAN BRIEF

### AN OVERLOOKED CRISIS IN AN OVERLOOKED REGION

Violence related to the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin which straddles Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has received growing attention since the conflict intensified in 2013. Less reported however and often overshadowed by pressing security and political considerations is the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding.

#### MASS DISPLACEMENT

Attacks by the Boko Haram insurgency as well as counter-insurgency measures have displaced more than 2.5 million people. This could fast become Africa's largest displacement crisis.

Population movements in the region are dynamic and have grown in complexity: some people have been displaced several times; some have crossed international boundaries, either as

refugees or as returnees seeking refuge in their countries of origin.

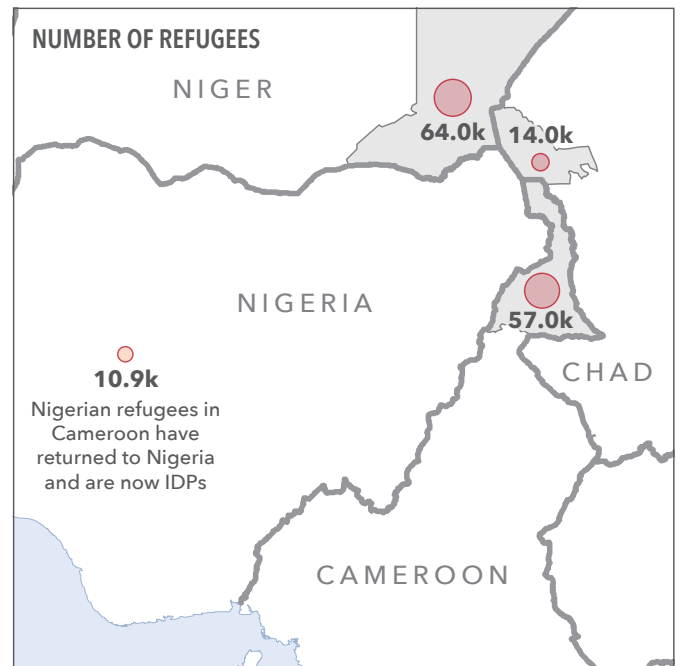
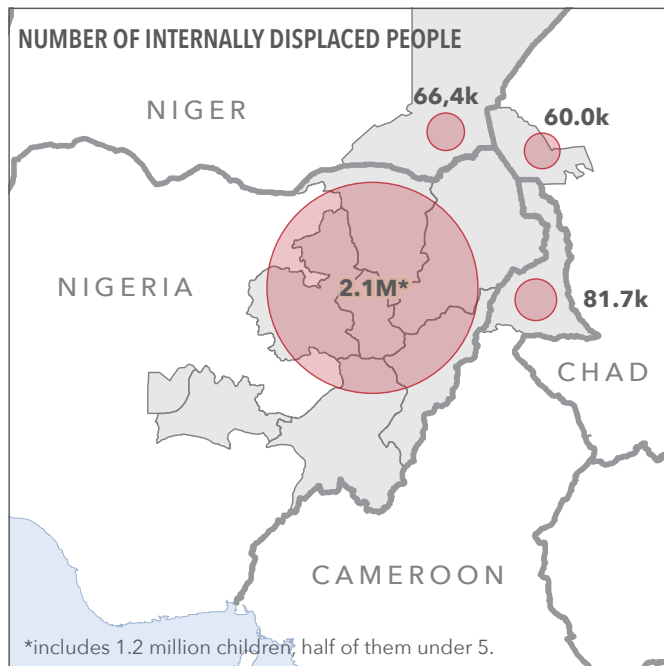
Up to 80% of the internally displaced have sought refuge with host communities, who are generously sharing their meagre resources thereby undermining their own coping mechanisms and resilience.

Displaced people and host communities are in need of emergency relief and protection.

29.6 million  
people living in areas affected  
by Boko Haram insurgency  
and related violence

  
2.5 million  
people displaced

  
2.1 million  
displaced in Nigeria alone



## HIGHLY VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

The Lake Chad Basin embodies the Sahelian paradigm. Cycles of droughts and floods, which repeatedly affected the region over the last decades, have hit the poorest communities and translated into persistently high levels of vulnerability. The region is prone to epidemics that often turn into health emergencies. **Violence and displacement are taking their toll on communities' livelihoods** – whose resources are already stretched. Insecurity has prevented farming, fishing and the highly important cross-border trade, **making communities even more dependent on humanitarian**

assistance.

The combined effect of large scale displacement, pervasive insecurity and underlying severe vulnerabilities is translating into record numbers of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

## THE PROTECTION OF MILLIONS IS AT STAKE

This is as much a humanitarian emergency as it is a protection crisis. Women and children, who represent the large majority of the displaced, bear the brunt of the violence. Women and girls kidnapped by Boko Haram have been subjected to physical and psychological

abuse, forced labour, forced marriage and sexual slavery. Boys have been forcibly enrolled as combatants. As counter insurgency operations intensify, too many civilians are caught in the conflict. Improvised Explosive Devices and other Explosive Remnants of War pose great danger to the displaced and host communities in affected areas. **Protection must be central to the humanitarian response.**

Resources and funding are urgently needed to address the issue of protection. Safe spaces for women and children, access to health and psychological support, and training of healthcare staff need further resources.



7 years

the estimated age of youngest boys and girls used as suicide bombers



85%

of communities in Adamawa (Nigeria) report children separated from their families



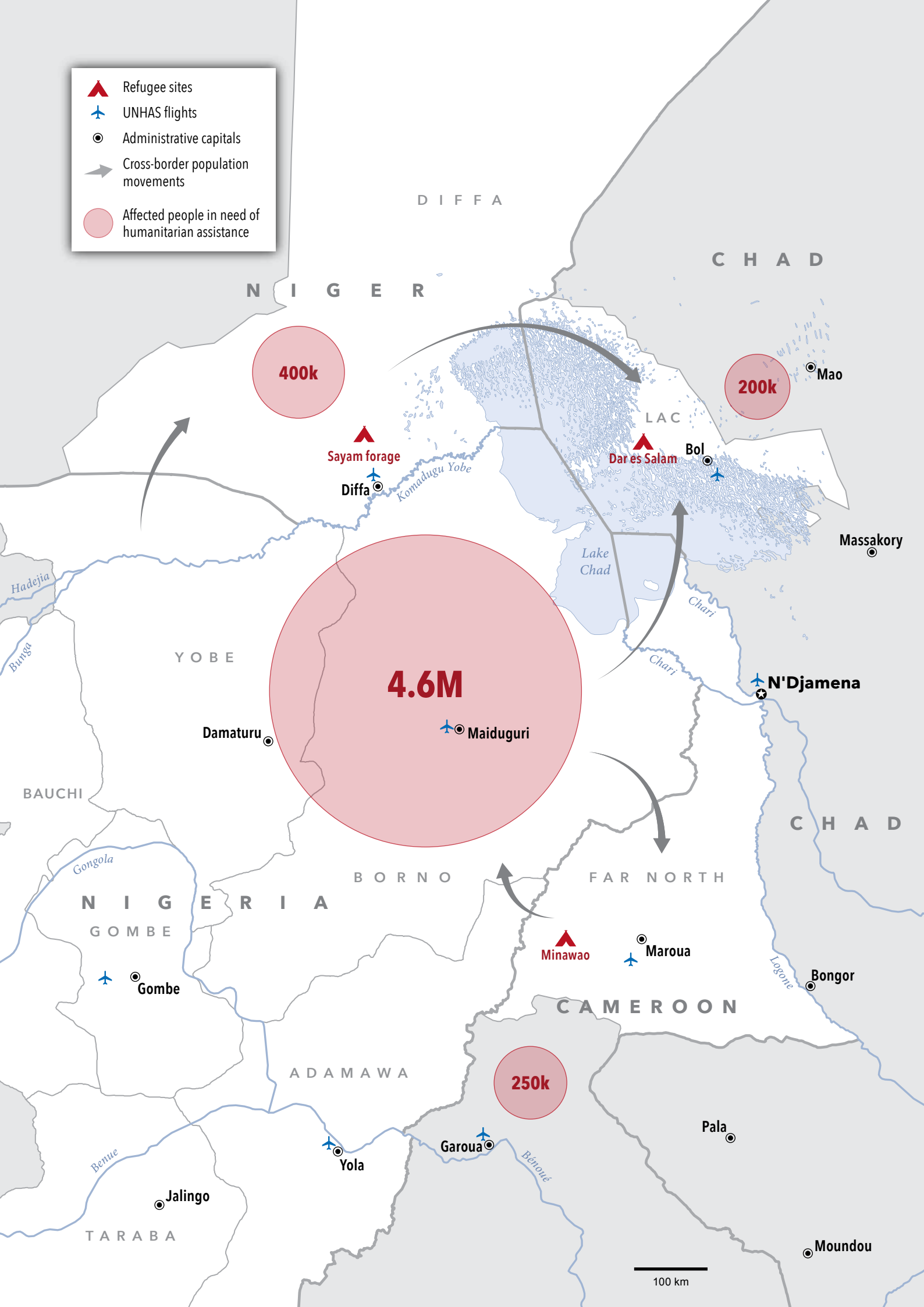
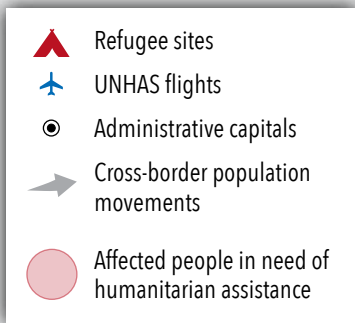
2,000

estimated number of women and girls abducted by Boko Haram since the start of 2014



700,000

number of children under 5 displaced by violence



## TOGETHER, WE MUST TAKE ACTION

Governments in affected countries have shown great leadership and initiative in responding to humanitarian needs, with the support from international and national humanitarian organizations.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done – and can be done. Across the Lake Chad region, an urgent scale-up in humanitarian operations is much needed. This requires efforts on all parts.

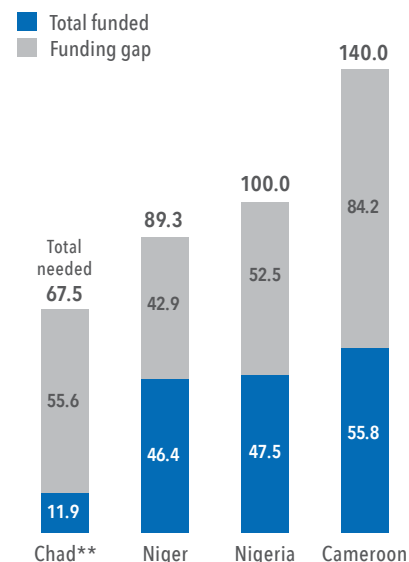
The response remains woefully underfunded – donor Governments must urgently step up their financial commitment to the humanitarian response. Of the total funding requirement of US\$396.8 million, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) contributed US\$27.2 million to spearhead life-saving activities. **Member States should take example from the generosity of the host communities and Governments of the region, and mobilize to address the political, social**

and economic drivers of the crisis and urgently support the humanitarian response.

Affected Governments, in turn, can support the scale-up of humanitarian assistance by facilitating administrative procedures, and supporting unhindered and safe access by humanitarian actors in insecure and hard-to-reach areas. Although protecting and responding to the needs of affected people is the primary responsibility of government, an international humanitarian presence can help advise and coordinate the complex and fast-evolving operation.

The international community must come together – to raise awareness and mobilize the support required to address humanitarian needs, and to create the conditions for the safe, sustainable and voluntary internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees.

**FUNDING BY COUNTRY IN 2015\***  
in million US\$



\*Includes Humanitarian Response Plans and Regional Refugee Response Plans.

\*\*In Chad, two response plans have been launched in 2015 addressing successive waves of displacement in April (\$26 M) and September (\$11.5 M).

## WHAT IF WE FAIL TO RESPOND?

The Lake Chad Basin is at a crossroads. Violence is disrupting the fragile equilibrium of communities who have long learned to adapt their livelihoods. As displaced communities, in particular farmers, were forced to abandon their fields, they will miss a crucial harvest next month. Border closures impede vital cross-border trade. This damages

the economy, adversely affects the terms of trade and adds to the already grave humanitarian consequences of the situation.

Without timely humanitarian assistance, the fragile livelihoods of communities will be destroyed. Hunger, malnutrition, high

unemployment rates make fertile ground for grievance and radicalization, especially amongst the youth, whom the crisis is affecting the most. **Without concerted and timely engagement by Governments, donors, and aid agencies, we risk further instability, increased need, and losing the next generation.**



5 million

people in need of food assistance - don't have enough to eat or else lack access to nutritious foods



225,000

children <5 suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition risk dying



208,000

children not attending school (more than 1,100 schools destroyed, damaged or closed)



3,394

people affected by cholera in Nigeria and Cameroon, causing 156 deaths