

Oslo Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region, Berlin, 6 September 2017 Perspectives from Cameroon INGOs

Overview: The Far North is one of Cameroon's poorest regions and has long experienced chronic under-development resulting in poverty, limited access to basic services, high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Social disparities and the weak presence of the state are factors that increase vulnerability. 325,589¹ people are now displaced of which 235,193 IDPs, a steady increase from the 251,003 in January 2017. Insecurity continues with regular Boko Haram attacks. Between 25 and 30 security incidents have been recorded each month since the beginning of the year, with a significant increase in suicide bombings during Ramadan. The Far North is the second most affected region, following Borno State in Nigeria².

Humanitarian funding: The Humanitarian Response Plan for Cameroon seeks US\$310 million to meet the needs of 1.2 million people. As of 23 August 2017, approximately \$91 million or 29% was secured. Protection, Health, WASH and Education are amongst the most underfunded sectors.

Humanitarian access: Humanitarian access continues to be impeded by insecurity, bad road networks and climatic challenges with the intense rainy season particularly affecting access to parts of Logone et Chari department. At the same time UNHAS services continue, but a direct connection between Logone et Chari and the rest of the country would be valuable.

Humanitarian coordination: Coordination of actions remains fundamental to the success of the crisis response and further steps are required to continue to improve humanitarian coordination. Adequate human and financial resources must be dedicated to ensure robust coordination mechanisms are maintained at the national and regional levels.

Civilian Protection and the upholding of international law and humanitarian principles and standards: Protection risks appear most prevalent in areas bordering Nigeria. Despite the signing of the Tripartite Agreement³, more than 4,000 Nigerian refugees have been forcibly returned and others have been denied access into Cameroon since the start of 2017. In parallel, between April and June, approximately 13,000 refugees were voluntarily returned to Nigeria from Minawao refugee camp despite the conditions for return not being fulfilled. Such cases have not been recorded since the end of July following intensified advocacy by humanitarian actors. However, there is a continued need for humanitarian partners to advocate for the respect of protection principles for all those affected by the crisis, including the voluntary nature of returns.

Move towards stabilisation: Urgent life-saving assistance must be the first priority. Stabilisation built on the return of local administration and basic services most impacted by insurgency movement attacks will need to be strengthened through engagement in early recovery actions.

The NGO signatories to this letter call upon the Government of Cameroon, the international community and donors to:

1. Ensure adequate funding to meet the humanitarian needs of the population as set out in the HRP 2017
2. Ensure safe humanitarian access across the Far North of Cameroon
3. Continue to reinforce humanitarian coordination structures
4. Prioritize programs that support the protection of civilians and respect of international law and humanitarian principles
5. Reinforce local administration and basic social services through investment and collaboration with early recovery actors to build on the humanitarian response



¹ DTM9

² INSO Q2 report, July 2017

³ Tripartite Agreement signed in March 2017 between the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon together with UNHCR