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## **15 NGOs Urge United Nations General Assembly to Make Relief Efforts for People Affected by Boko Haram High on the Agenda**

*Hunger stalks northeastern Nigeria as governments and donors to West Africa's Lake Chad Basin crisis meet in New York*

**BALTIMORE, MD, September 23, 2016** – The ongoing conflict with Boko Haram in West Africa has pushed the number of people facing the threat of severe hunger to more than 6 million according to the latest assessments, say 15 humanitarian organizations. The warning comes as governments and donors meet to talk about the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region at the UN General Assembly in New York on the 23 September.

The revised UN appeal is calling for US\$740 million until the end of the year to meet the emergency needs caused by the crisis. Only 24 per cent of this has been received. Organizations say that without more money they are unable to reach the most vulnerable people even in areas that can be accessed.

Over 65,000 people are already living in famine in pockets of northeast Nigeria, and over one million people are one step away from famine. In the countries of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon there are 6.3 million people severely food insecure. Of these 4.4 million people are in Nigeria.

At the UN General Assembly world leaders will also discuss the plight of refugees and migrants, but those who have fled their homes but remain inside their countries will be missed from the discussions. With 2.6 million people on the move, the Lake Chad Basin is Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis and should be high on their agenda.

Yannick Pouchalan, Action Against Hunger's Country Director for Nigeria: "What we are seeing is families teetering on the edge of famine. If organizations can't reach communities in areas trapped by the conflict, we will be looking at a far greater disaster than we are currently facing. Many of those arriving in camps are already severely malnourished. We see families who have not eaten for days, many are begging for food. If the situation continues to deteriorate many more people may die."

In some areas of Borno state in Nigeria, the rate of acute malnutrition in children under five is over 50 per cent. This is similar to what was seen during the 2011 crisis in Somalia when the scale and severity of hunger led to a declaration of famine.

The conflict, and military operations to counter it, has meant that farmland, rivers and lakes that people rely on for growing food and fishing are off limits as part of military operations in Nigeria, Niger and Chad. Markets have been closed, and people's means of transport, such as motorbikes, have been banned, cutting people off from their ways of making a living.

Lisa Bay, Oxfam's Lake Chad Basin's Operational Lead, said: "Civilians have paid a high price for policies of cutting off Boko Haram's food and supplies. People should be able to fish, farm and sell their goods at markets. We have seen hugely generous communities welcome people who have fled their homes – but now they have nothing to give. They too are hungry and need access to aid."

15 organizations in Nigeria are looking for over US\$143 million until the end of the year to provide life saving support such as food, water, shelter and safety, but are struggling to secure the funding and scale up their activities.

Sarah Ndikumana, IRC's Nigeria Country Director: "We have received little over US\$53 million, but there is a funding gap of nearly US\$90 million. Without money we simply can't reach the people who need it the most with aid. The situation is critical with many lives hanging in the balance. We urge donors to dig deep to stop this crisis turning into a huge catastrophe. We cannot stand-by and watch thousands of people suffer and die when we can do something about it."

Jennifer Poidatz, Vice President of Catholic Relief Services' Humanitarian Response Department, said: "We need to learn from other protracted crises in the world, where short-term solutions simply don't allow people who have fled from their homes to go back to their lives. Only robust funding over multiple years, of both international organizations and local and national organizations on the ground, will ensure that we can adequately respond. We also need political leadership and action to address the root causes of the violence."

As a result of the conflict, there have been alarming levels of sexual violence, human rights abuses and forced recruitment, even of young children. The security situation remains fragile and violence continues, making it difficult for the agencies to get assistance to all the people who need it.

### **Notes to editors**

According to the Integrated Food Security Classification Phase (IPC) 65,069 people in pockets of North East Nigeria are in IPC Level 5 and already experiencing famine. Of these, the vast majority (58,506) are in Borno state and the rest are in Yobe state. Another 1 million are in IPC level 4, or one step away from famine.

Figures for the UN Response Requirements and shortfall are from Lake Chad Basin, Revised Requirement and Response Priorities September – December 2016.

Figures on the funding gap are from the international organizations in Nigeria. The organizations are as follows:

Action Against Hunger  
Action Aid  
Christian Aid  
Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)  
Danish Refugee Council  
International Medical Corps  
Intersos  
International Rescue Committee  
Mercy Corps  
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)  
Oxfam  
Plan  
Premiere Urgence International  
Save The Children

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