



# Response Strategy

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN LAKE CHAD BASIN





**Cover: Haoua Abdoulay, 40, and her family of six were displaced from their village after Boko Haram launched violent attacks. They have been living in Kaya village, Chad, and have benefited from CRS food assistance.**

*Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS*

**Date of publication:** November 2016

For more information, please contact: Scott Campbell, Regional Director of Central Africa, at [scott.campbell@crs.org](mailto:scott.campbell@crs.org), and Jennifer Overton, Regional Director of West Africa, at [jennifer.Overton@crs.org](mailto:jennifer.Overton@crs.org)

**faith. action. results.**

## OVERVIEW

Spanning Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, this complex crisis affects 10 million people in one of the world's poorest, most drought-prone regions. A longer-term, comprehensive response is critical to meet people's needs from relief to recovery, and will require significantly increased commitment from the international community.

The Lake Chad Basin has a history of traditional leadership and diversified livelihoods. Yet, environmental degradation, climate change, poor governance and isolation have taken a heavy toll, resulting in some of the region's worst socio-economic indicators, including those for infant mortality and education. Large numbers of youth are displaced, jobless and frustrated, especially by the limited prospect of economic, political or social integration in society.

This situation is further complicated by Boko Haram, an extremist movement. Since 2009, the group has carried out attacks that have killed thousands of people, primarily in northeastern Nigeria. It has planted bombs in public places, abducted women and girls, forcefully conscripted young men and boys, and destroyed villages and towns.

The effects of the violence on this already vulnerable area are devastating. Insecurity has displaced communities, disrupted once vibrant trade and markets, and destroyed people's livelihoods in farming, livestock raising, and fishing. Deteriorating agricultural production has led to a spike in cereal prices, and trade has been hindered by restricted movement due to insecurity.

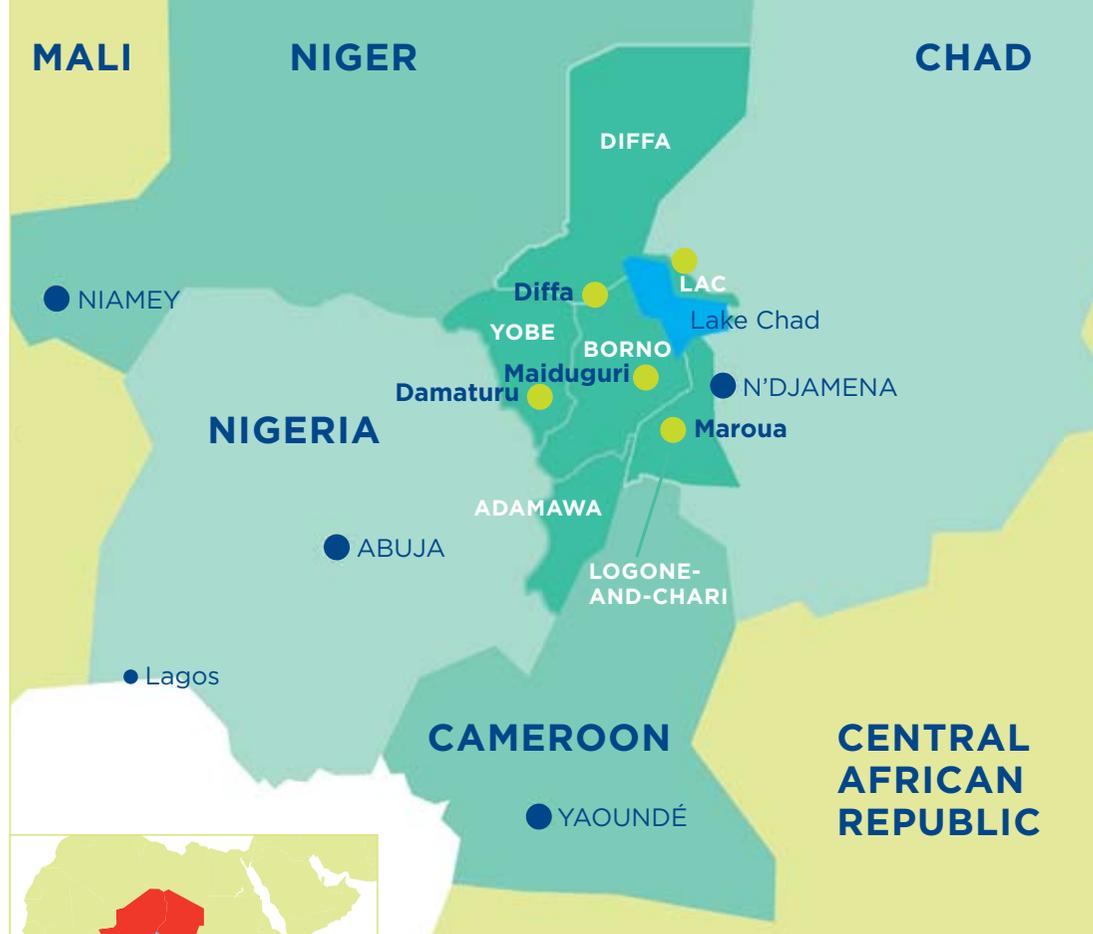
Although the lake is a highly productive and critical resource for the food, water and income of tens of millions of people, it is at only 10 percent of the volume it was in the 1960s, due to the effects of climate change, resource governance decisions, and environmental degradation. Problems caused by diminishing water supply are now exacerbated by the influx of displaced people seeking refuge.



**“If you told 20 people to bring their food together, you wouldn't even have 20 pounds, – hardly enough to feed just 1 family for 2 days.”**

**Masarma Brem in Diffa region, Niger**

## A REGION IN CRISIS



- Area and key centers of CRS activities
- Damaturu, Nigeria
- Maiduguri, Nigeria
- Diffa, Niger
- Lac Region, Chad
- Maroua, Cameroon

## CONTEXT AND NEEDS

As of October, at least 9.2 million people urgently need food, water and basic supplies. Of these, 2.7 million also need shelter, having been uprooted from their homes and towns. In some areas, people have been unable to plant or harvest for 3 years due to the violence, and they now face severe food shortages. An estimated 6.3 million people are experiencing severe hunger, and are unable to meet the most minimal food needs of their families. More than 478,000 children have severe acute malnutrition.

Compounding the poor health and nutrition situation across all countries are the deteriorating water, sanitation and hygiene conditions, and the limited supply of potable water for both displaced people and host communities. Many people show signs of severe trauma as a result of the violence. In some areas, rape, sexual exploitation and harassment have been prevalent in the camps and settlements for internally displaced persons, often targeting female-headed households and women from ethnic minorities. Communities face ongoing protection challenges, and are ill-equipped to implement measures to protect the most vulnerable.

The scale and urgency of these neglected needs demands a serious, engaged and holistic response. As of October, only 29 percent of the funding requirements for this humanitarian crisis had been met by commitments from the international community, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Also, the funding tends to be short-term and country-specific, when longer-term, cross regional support will be far more effective in addressing the underlying factors of this complex, dynamic crisis.

## CRS RESPONSE

CRS is responding across all four countries, providing emergency food; livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and agricultural support. As outlined on page 5, CRS will prioritize monthly food e-vouchers and cash-for-work opportunities to help families meet their most basic food needs. Support with agricultural

tools, seeds and also livestock—through seed and voucher fairs—will help people begin to recover their livelihoods as well as their local economy. Investment in WASH will bring vital, potable water through the construction of boreholes, complemented by critical sanitation and hygiene activities and supplies.

## CRS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Given the complex political-economic dynamics and diverse humanitarian priorities across the four countries, CRS ensures that programs are tailored, gender- and conflict-sensitive, responsive, and uphold “Do No Harm” principles. CRS pays special attention to governance in how we engage with traditional leadership to ensure that all groups, including youth and women, are included in decision-making. CRS’ emergency response approach emphasizes the immediate restoration of food and other assets, such as shelter and living supplies, as well as materials to support livelihoods—like agricultural tools and small livestock. CRS will also work with families and communities to improve long-term food security, livelihoods, and market recovery. With an emphasis on social cohesion and healing, CRS’ program strategy recognizes the critical role of youth, and their involvement in program decision-making, problem-solving and adaptive learning.

### Understanding of local contexts

CRS’ strategy leverages a deep, nuanced understanding of local contexts. CRS benefits from a long-standing presence in each of the affected countries, with an infrastructure of field offices and staff in place that allow for a robust, coherent response. CRS’ extensive network of trusted local partners enables us to adapt to quickly changing needs, and tailor support to the needs of the local contexts.

### Goal: People in the Lake Chad Basin live peacefully with strengthened assets and productive livelihoods

SO 1: Affected populations' restore their food and assets with dignity	SO 2: Affected populations benefit from improved food security and livelihood outcomes	SO 3: Affected populations benefit from strengthened social cohesion and protection
IR 1.1 Affected populations reside in safe and adequate shelter	IR 2.1 Affected populations practice improved, sustainable agricultural production techniques (natural resource management, climate-smart agriculture, market-based crop/livestock production)	IR 3.1 Affected populations, especially women and youth, access quality psycho-social support services
IR 1.2 Affected populations meet their immediate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs	IR 2.2 Affected populations adopt diversified income generating activities	IR 3.2 Local structures and systems <sup>2</sup> support and promote social cohesion
IR 1.3 Affected populations meet their immediate food and nutritional needs	IR 2.3 Affected populations have access to improved water infrastructure	IR 3.3 Engaged civil society organizations positively influence government policies and systems
IR 1.4 Affected populations access productive assets for improved livelihood strategies	IR 2.4 Affected populations adopt effective strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change on livelihoods	IR 3.4 People re-establish trust within and among communities
IR 1.5 Youth have improved life and vocational skills	IR 2.5 Affected populations have year-round access to a quality diet	IR 3.5 Affected populations reduce conflict over access to and use of natural resources including pastures and water
	IR 2.6: Youth have increased access to productive livelihoods	IR 3.6: Youth apply skills in peacebuilding and civic participation

1. Populations include internally displaced persons, refugees, third country nationals (TCNs) and/or returnees (non-refugee nationals returning to country of origin).

2. Local structures and systems include traditional and religious leaders, beliefs and values.

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

### Food security, livelihoods and assets recovery

Immediate support includes: Meeting food needs through vouchers, and cash grants for living supplies and other basic needs. Longer-term support will emphasize technical training to diversify livelihoods. Training will incorporate marketing and financial planning for small enterprise development, as well as technical guidance specific to diverse livelihoods—such as processing and value addition for crops, development of artisanal activities, and group management to help people access larger marketing opportunities. Support will also include market price monitoring and assessments, early warning and surveillance systems, and financial and material support so people can invest in increasing their household incomes. Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) will support participating family members in recovering their assets and livelihoods through small business activities. SILCs also help to strengthen community relations and build social cohesion.

### Water, sanitation and hygiene

CRS will implement WASH programs that provide life-saving measures by reducing the transmission of diarrheal and infectious diseases, and also ensure people's well-being, dignity, and safety. Activities include provision of clean potable water (using bladders or by repairing existing water-point infrastructure), distribution of hygiene kits and water treatment chemicals, installation of basic sanitation and water distribution points, and hygiene education. For sanitation, CRS emphasizes safe disposal of human waste, and will develop adequate bathing facilities, waste disposal, drainage, and vector control systems.



**Adam Bassai, 49, works in his garden in Djetkoram village in the Diffa region of Niger. Seeds he received from CRS and our local partners in Niger have helped improve his harvest.** *Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS*

CRS-constructed temporary latrines may eventually be replaced with more durable models. In the recovery phase, communities will build their capacity to manage and sustain WASH systems, while receiving education on hygiene and safe nutrition practices. CRS will re-establish or improve infrastructure, including constructing boreholes and water tanks. Critical throughout is the use of environmental impact assessments to guide interventions and technology choices. Given the scarce water resources, CRS will incorporate conflict mitigation and peacebuilding into all aspects of its programming and engagement with communities.

### Shelter

Tents and tarpaulins will provide immediate, safe and dignified protection from the elements. For transitional and medium-term shelter, CRS will work with communities to make use of locally available materials, technologies and skills, whenever possible. CRS designs shelter response in close collaboration with the community and in consideration of traditional architecture and cultural acceptability. We also strengthen local economic markets. If markets are healthy enough, we provide people with cash or vouchers so they can buy materials and hire laborers locally. When direct distributions are necessary, we buy locally available goods and services.

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES



A mother and daughter use their CRS vouchers to get vital living supplies from a local vendor in Nigeria.

Photo by CRS staff

### Social cohesion

CRS supports a series of community-level trainings to build social cohesion. *Binding* activities provide space for internal reflection and personal transformation, including trauma healing. *Bonding* activities strengthen relations within respective identity groups through dialogue and collaboration with other members of the group. *Bridging* activities bring together identity groups to interact purposefully in a safe space to promote mutual understanding and trust so that they can jointly construct a shared vision of a peaceful future.

### Vocational and peacebuilding training for youth

Throughout its response, CRS will identify and reinforce positive, constructive and skill-building roles for young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years.<sup>3</sup> Actively engaging youth as resources in emergency response, recovery, and development activities will help improve intergenerational communication between youth and elders. Youth programming will focus on training in life skills (including literacy and numeracy), basic business skills, entrepreneurship and technical skills. Youth will also be trained and empowered as agents of change and partners in the development of their communities. Programs will include peacebuilding, conflict analysis and civic education and participation. Community conversations will also be used to increase awareness of the unique needs of youth in conflict situations and improve social cohesion.

3. Special emphasis will be placed on youth aged 15 to 24 years, since they are a particularly vulnerable subset of the youth population.

## CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAM STANDARDS

- Adherence to [core humanitarian standards](#).
- Robust **monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)** activities (including beneficiary and real-time evaluations) in order to learn and adapt strategies and interventions.
- Applying **information and communications technology for development (ICT4D) solutions** to improve accuracy and timeliness of data, and to monitor and manage rapidly changing contexts.
- Integration of **CRS protection mainstreaming framework**, ensuring that CRS staff and our partners are trained to provide communities with safe and dignified programming.
- Establishing strong management systems for **operational excellence**, with scenario-based planning that **ensures agility** to rapidly scale up and scale down in response to the crisis.



Adidja Anina washes her dishes with water from a community borehole in Niewa village, Eastern Cameroon, constructed with support from CRS.

Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

faith. action. results.