

Background paper for the Thematic Session on Education in Emergencies 24 February – 16:15-17:00

A number of overlapping factors have led to the complex humanitarian crisis in Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin region: conflict, poverty and climate change. Further compounding these burdens is the pervasive menace of Boko Haram. This armed movement, which specifically opposes education, has a track record of attacking and destroying schools in an already challenging environment for education.

The Nigeria and Lake Chad Region Thematic Session on Education in Emergencies will support the objectives of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region. It will guide discussions on key strategic investments and partnerships to ensure an effective emergency response while enabling the rehabilitation and strengthening of education systems in line with Agenda 2030. The global community will not be able to fulfil its commitment to the SDG Agenda without including children and youth affected by conflict and displacement.

Challenges in delivering education in the Lake Chad Basin

Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger account for **14 million primary school age children who are out of school** across the four countries, and **10.5 million** of these out-of-school children are to be found in Nigeria. In the region surrounding Lake Chad a total of **3.36 million school aged children and youth** (aged 3-17 years) are affected by the conflict and are **in urgent need of humanitarian assistance**. Of these children, **75 000** are **refugees** (UNHCR). Various crises, scant resources, socio-economic inequalities, insecurity, severe shortage of classrooms, chronic displacements, and overstretched institutional and human capacities have exacerbated the already low quality of and access to education. Inadequate access to education has greatly increased the vulnerability of children and youth, and made them even more susceptible to recruitment by armed groups (NGA HNO 2017).

Before the crisis, the Diffa region in Niger had **the lowest enrolment rates** in the country. In the most remote areas of Chad and Cameroon, the task of providing quality education to all girls and boys entailed considerable challenges. In the extreme north of Cameroon and in Adamawa in Nigeria, the out-of-school figures were as high as 35%. And in Borno in Nigeria even as high as 44.6%. Underlying factors for children being out of school are gender, ethnicity, geography and disability. A girl from the poorest household in north-eastern Nigeria is unlikely to go to school.

Teachers and students have been detained and intimidated, injured and sometimes killed.

In northeast Nigeria, at least 611 teachers have been deliberately killed and a further 19 000 have been forced to flee since 2009. More than 2 000 people, many of them female, have been abducted by Boko Haram, in many cases from their schools. Thousands more students and teachers have been injured, some in deadly suicide bombs. In Niger three attacks on schools were reported in the Diffa region between June and November 2016.

Many schools can no longer be used because they have been damaged, destroyed, are sheltering displaced families, or are occupied by armed groups or security forces. In north-eastern Nigeria, more than 1 500 schools have been destroyed since 2015. Today, in Borno alone, 1073 schools (56%) remain closed and four schools in the north east of the country are being used for military purposes by the Nigerian security forces. In the extreme north of

Cameroon, 10 primary and secondary schools remain occupied and are being used for military purposes and 144 schools have closed down due to insecurity.

Even where there is access to national schools, the **language of instruction is a challenge**, and this prevents Nigerian children from continuing their education.

Inadequate regulatory frameworks linking formal and non-formal education are limiting the opportunities for children and youth to transition to formal education. Designing, resourcing and implementing **accelerated learning programmes** is a major challenge for the education sector across the four countries. Yet, investments in education have the potential to help children re-enter formal education, gain a basic education and life skills, and contribute to broader efforts to stabilise and rebuild the affected regions.

Ministries of education in the four countries are coordinating and implementing the education response. Education authorities are working with UN agencies and NGO partners to provide access to quality education. In particular, they are working to facilitate the peaceful integration of displaced girls and boys into host community schools, to provide education services for refugee children and youth in the camps (Chad and Cameroon), and to offer accelerated and distance learning programmes to children who are out of school. The authorities are also working to improve security in schools.

The education sector remains one of the most underfunded sectors. Out of the total of USD 33.7 million requested in the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan for education, only a small percentage went to the funding of education: 26.1% in Nigeria; 73% (including GPE accelerated funding) in Chad; 7.7% in Cameroon; and 13% in Niger. This year the funding needed for education in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin crisis is **USD 84 million**.

Violence and insecurity have repercussions for years to come. When a child is displaced for more than six months, there is a high probability that he or she will remain displaced for up to three years or longer – and may never have the chance to get back into school.

Opportunities and key asks:

The following asks are crucial in order to avoid another ‘lost generation’:

- 1. Prioritise funding for education in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.** Increased, long-term predictable and flexible financing is necessary to meet the education needs of children and youth affected by the displacement crises. Host governments and affected children need donors to make three- to five-year commitments. This is essential in order to keep children and youth in school and ensure sustainable education-system expansion. The aim in 2017 is to reach 2 million girls and boys, (including 75 000 refugees) across the region (HRP).
- 2. Protect children through education.** Sustain and systematise existing efforts to create **protective learning environments**, day-to-day provision of psychosocial support in the classroom, preparation and implementation of school-based emergency plans and other programmes linking education and child protection efforts in communities. Investments are also needed in education infrastructure, in the recruitment, training and deployment of qualified teachers, and in adequate learning and teaching materials.
- 3. Leave no one behind.** Rapidly establish/expand quality, flexible learning programmes that can also reach the most vulnerable children and youth, and those who are most affected by

the consequences of the conflict. This includes accelerated and distance education programmes and non-formal education programmes.

- 4. Protect education. Step up advocacy to stop attacks on schools, education facilities and personnel.** Encourage governments to endorse and implement the *Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.
- 5. Support governments and partners in rebuilding and strengthening national education** systems in line with the global commitments set out in Agenda 2030.
- 6. Strengthen collaboration between governments, and humanitarian and development actors** to facilitate effective emergency response. Prepare regional strategies to facilitate sustainable long-term planning and programming, including for the return of refugee children and youth to quality education, and for protective learning environments.
- 7. Strengthen data and information management systems and communication** to enable an effective response, an in-depth conflict- and gender-sensitive sector analysis in preparation for transitional and development planning activities.