

Written evidence submitted by the United Nations World Food Programme to the Foreign Affairs Committee (IRN0039)

Introduction

1. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disaster, and the impact of climate change. In recognition of work on the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus, WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 for its efforts to combat hunger and contributions towards peace and stability. WFP is one of the largest development partners in Nigeria working in conflict-affected areas. In 2020, WFP supported over 1.8 million people, 57 percent of them women and girls, with life-saving food assistance.

Country context

2. Nigeria achieved lower-middle-income status in 2014 and is Africa's largest economy. However, in 2020 Nigeria was ranked 161 of 189 countries in the Human Development Index. Nationally, 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, while in the northeast the figure is 77 percent. In 2020, the number of food-insecure people rose to 4.3 million and the October analysis projected that 5.1 million people in the northeast will be in IPC Phase 3 and 4 during the June to August 2021 lean season (Cadre Harmonisé).
3. Conflict and instability in the northeast continues to limit humanitarian activities and agricultural labour activities in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. Violent attacks by non-state armed groups and military counter-operations concentrated in Borno State have disrupted farming and other livelihoods and limited the functionality of markets and other basic services. Over 1.7 million people are internally displaced in these three states, most of them women and children.
4. Nigeria is heavily affected by climate change, including frequent flooding in the rainy season, soil degradation, drought, desertification, and extreme weather. Deteriorating environmental conditions in Nigeria's Middle Belt have contributed to decades of clashes between cattle herders and local farmers, leading to death and displacement. Over-exploitation of wood resources is also driving environmental degradation and deforestation. The fragility of the natural environment undermines food security and causes social tensions. Considering these challenges, fostering social-cultural cohesion and climate action are priority areas for the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

UK aid in Nigeria

5. Nigeria is among the largest recipients of UK Aid – in 2019 it was the fifth largest recipient of bilateral UK aid. Nigeria was singled out in the Integrated Review as a partner of focus in Africa and for realising the UK's strategic objectives for ODA. As such, the FCDO's country programme in Nigeria must serve as a flagship in demonstrating the UK's role as a force for good internationally. To this end, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) offers the following recommendations:

Famine alert, food insecurity and conflict in Nigeria

6. According to the March 2021 Cadre Harmonisé, 12.8 million people are currently food insecure in Nigeria. Of this, 4.4 million people are facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3-4) in Nigeria's conflict-affected northeast, with the number of people in emergency acute food insecurity (CH Phase 4) is projected to reach 800,000 during the June-August 2021 lean season.
7. While conflict is one of the key drivers of this severe deterioration in food security, the COVID-19 pandemic has had negative impacts on agriculture and livelihoods both in rural and urban areas due to restrictive measures undertaken to control the spread. Consequently, food prices for staple crops have increased up to 40 percent, limiting vulnerable people's food purchase capacity and ultimately, affecting their food security and nutrition status.
8. The Executive Director of WFP issued a famine alert in October 2020 based on the analysis and early warning for famine. The recent analysis and reports indicate alarming conditions in inaccessible areas of northern Nigeria. People relocating from inaccessible areas have reported deaths due to severe food shortages. Considering this context, WFP has scaled-up its emergency responses through a second budget revision, approved at ED-FAO DG level in May 2021. WFP is currently supporting 1.7 million people with emergency response, including 200,000 as contingency. Based on recent reports and analysis, discussion is underway for a further scale-up of the emergency response to reach 2.4 million people.

Recommendations

- **Famine prevention:** WFP welcomes the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact, led by the UK, and commitments made by the G7 to address critical funding gaps, promote humanitarian access, scale-up anticipatory action, partner with the World Bank Group, and strengthen data and analysis. WFP particularly welcomes the USD 382 million committed by the G7 to Nigeria to avert famine. It is critical that these commitments are followed-up with new funding support from the UK, and that commitments outlined in the compact are prioritised in 2021 and through 2022, considering that famine will continue to be a looming threat in Nigeria and elsewhere.
- **Prioritising the humanitarian-development-peace nexus:** Food security and peace are interlinked – this is particularly a reality for West African countries as food insecurity is a root cause of communal conflict, especially between farmers and herders. While urgent humanitarian response is crucial in the current context, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus ('triple nexus') needs to be prioritised simultaneously for sustainable long-term solutions for peace and development before it is too late. Noting that the linkage between food security and peace is recognised by the Nobel Committee, WFP encourages FCDO to extend their support for triple nexus interventions to bridge humanitarian and development interventions to foster community resilience and promote prospects for peace.
- **Supporting resilience building and food security to prevent shocks from climate change:** Northern Nigeria is the most underdeveloped region in the country, lacking basic education, health, WASH, infrastructure, and other facilities. This region is also heavily impacted by climate change. Scarcity of natural resources is a major driver of conflict as it directly affects agriculture and livelihood activities. Northern Nigeria also faces drought or floods every year that heavily impact agricultural production and livelihoods. During the rainy season, northern Nigeria becomes disconnected due to heavy rainfall and poor road conditions which pose further challenges to supply chain and markets. WFP recommends targeting the climate ODA priority and UK

Government's support towards resilience building activities and responses to climatic shocks.

Supporting security and humanitarian access

9. The crisis in northeast Nigeria crisis completed its 11th year in 2020. Armed conflict, violence, banditry, and kidnapping have increased over the last decade. However, this worsening scenario has accelerated over the past two years as the number of security-related incidents increased. Since mid-April 2021, humanitarian operations in northern Borno State have been limited to critical life-saving responses. The death of JAS leader Abubakar Shekau by rival ISWAP in May 2021 altered the conflict dynamics in southern Borno. By early 2022, severe hindrances are expected to humanitarian operations, with increased numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) out of humanitarian reach. Nigeria's armed forces are overstretched and unable to deter, repel or contain non-state armed groups (NSAGs). In parallel, conflict and instability are increasing in northwest Nigeria, including a persistent trend of mass abductions and kidnap-for-ransom, and high levels of violence from armed elements against civilians prompting additional displacement. Increased flows of weapons from Niger into Nigeria through the northwest region where the Nigerian army footprint is limited worsen the inhibiting context. Further deterioration of security will have trickle down effects in the south (Middle Belt).

Recommendations

- **Supporting humanitarian access and security agenda:** WFP requests enhanced support from the UK Government on security and access-related interventions. WFP will continue efforts to negotiate humanitarian access and increase security solutions. In the coming months WFP plans to provide tailored access negotiation training for key personnel and improve measures for physical security – for example, upgrade of safe rooms with overhead protection and hostage incident management training for security personnel in Nigeria. Additional donor support is required for these interventions. WFP will also strengthen the capacity of partner organizations and work closely with the Government and other UN agencies in addressing these requirements.
- **Strengthening UN Common Services:** WFP may also need to re-evaluate and expand its UN common services to the wider humanitarian community operating in northern Nigeria. This will require stronger donor support, especially flexible funding.

Supporting improving protection

10. Protection is among the major concerns in a conflict context. As the number of IDPs and returnees (refugees returning from Cameroon) in Nigeria continues to rise, protection issues also increase. For instance, scale down of the humanitarian footprint in Damasak due to worsening insecurity has triggered serious protection issues and concerns among the population. Recent food distributions that did not reach all IDPs and other affected populations have led to tensions, especially where information is scarce about when another distribution will be conducted to cover remaining gaps.
11. In addition, since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, gender-based violence (GBV) is on the rise. In most areas of humanitarian intervention, women and girls experience various forms of violence, therefore increasing the need for response, prevention, and mitigation of GBV. There is also need for monitoring returnees and IDPs who face challenges to obtain birth certificates and national identification cards.

12. Protection issues are carefully considered by humanitarian partners in Nigeria while designing and implementing activities. The Protection Sector in Nigeria has raised awareness and provided messaging on issues and concerns around camp closures, IDP returns and resettlement from one location to another. To better inform response strategy, Protection Sector partners are coordinating information on current conditions, including needs, challenges, and service availability in areas of return.

Recommendations

- Protection is a cross-cutting area in WFP programming. Considering the current volatile situation, WFP urges the UK Government to support protection-related interventions in Nigeria. The UK Government has been supporting WFP in the Sahel G5 to strengthen partner capacity for protection issues and WFP Nigeria asks the UK Government to extend similar support to Nigeria.

Other

Recommendation

- **Flexible funding:** In recent years, UK has been the second largest donor to WFP Nigeria's multi-donor humanitarian assistance interventions. WFP would benefit from flexible UK contributions. Flexible funding allows WFP to address the most pressing needs and prioritize the most urgent operational needs.

WFP presence in Nigeria

In 2016, WFP re-established formal presence in Nigeria upon the request of the Nigerian Government, to provide targeted food security and nutrition assistance to conflict-affected populations in the northeast. WFP first established a presence in Nigeria in 1968 in response to the Nigerian civil war.

In 2020, combined impacts from conflict and the pandemic caused the number of food-insecure people to rise from 2.95 million to 4.3 million. In response, WFP more than doubled its 2019 response to reach over 1.8 million people. WFP resilience-building activities supported Nigerians to rehabilitate 4,554 hectares of farmland and increase their income. WFP-supported communities planted 827,856 tree seedlings to improve the environment and organised 282 village groups to increase women's savings and strengthen their financial literacy. WFP also provides technical assistance and enabling support to the Government of Nigeria. WFP provided technical assistance to federal and state governments for the safe delivery of take-home rations as part of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme.

For 2021, WFP plans to support 1.7 million people with life-saving food and nutrition assistance in northeast Nigeria. WFP will also implement resilience building activities, multi-sectoral nutrition programming, capacity strengthening and deliver UN common service. The total budget for 2021 under the second budget revision of the WFP Nigeria Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022 is USD 471 million.

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