**Brief on the Food and Nutrition Security Situation in Northern Nigeria**

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***Abstract:*** Over one million people are struggling with severe food insecurity in northern Nigeria. The World Food Programme estimates that more than 65,000 people in the Borno State are facing famine-like conditions. Rising food prices and loss of livelihoods due to the presence of Boko Haram further limit population food access.

***Key words:*** severe malnutrition, famine, IDPs, emergency, crisis, Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, market access, rising food prices, loss of livelihood, inflation

In July 2016, the Minister of Health in Nigeria declared a ‘nutrition emergency’ in Borno State.[[1]](#footnote-0) Boko Haram activity has impacted the state’s food and nutrition security, as the group’s presence has uprooted agricultural livelihoods, limited market access and prevented the humanitarian community to provide emergency assistance to affected populations.[[2]](#footnote-1)

The number of people struggling with severe food insecurity has quadrupled since March 2016, to over one million people in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. More than 65,000 people in Borno and Yobe are estimated to be facing famine-like conditions.[[3]](#footnote-2) Particular zones of concern include local government areasnext to the Sambisa Forest and in northern Borno, where a government and UN joint survey found visible malnutrition among adults and children IDPs, food and water scarcity, lack of health facilities and functioning markets. Many areas impacted by Boko Haram are inaccessible to the Nigerian government and the UN for food and nutrition security assessments.

In the last six months, the Nigerian military has made territorial gains from Boko Haram in the northeast. As displaced populations return to their rural homes and find them in many cases uninhabitable, they flood to the cities, where they have to restart their lives and livelihoods, and are often exclusively dependent on external sources of assistance. In greater Maiduguri, the commercial center of Borno State and a hub for regional trade, over half of the 2.5 million people living there are IDPs (1.4 million people).[[4]](#footnote-3) Sixty-five percent of IDP households surveyed were food insecure; of those six percent faced severe food insecurity. Thirty-two percent of IDP households employed negative coping strategies like begging, food rationing and skipping meals.[[5]](#footnote-4)

At the same time, staple food prices have risen by 50-100 percent in northern Nigeria, due to increasing inflation (at 15 percent in May), higher transportation costs due to rising fuel prices, and a rapid decline in local food production due to insecurity, as people flee and leave their land fallow. Millet, maize, pulses and groundnut have increased in price by 151 percent, 142 percent, 16 percent and 4 percent respectively between March and August 2016.[[6]](#footnote-5) Exchange rate depreciation has raised the price of imported items like rice and vegetable oil, which further constrains the food purchasing power of conflict-affected populations. The cost of the household Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which represents the basic food requirements of a family, has risen 51 percent between March and September 2016.

**Policy Recommendation:** When developing policies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of Boko Haram combatants, it is vital to consider the current humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria. Vast swaths of the population are going hungry, particularly IDPs, who fled Boko Haram activities. The Government may consider instituting a public service component for reintegration, so that Boko Haram ex-combatants can help ameliorate the situation that their organization contributed to. Working on farms to increase crop production, assisting with the transportation of farm goods to markets and re-establishing local markets, will improve local food access and may ease the social acceptability of ex-Boko Haram fighters.

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