

The Shadow Pandemic in Northeast Nigeria: Hunger

"Vulnerable families in Northeast Nigeria are knocking on the door of starvation" – [World Food Programme](#)

30 November 2021 by Rahila Sule



Photo: WFP/Patrick Fuller

Hunger in Northeast Nigeria

As you read this, millions of families in Northeast Nigeria are on the brink of starvation. Imagine being forced to abandon your home and property because your village was invaded by gunmen. Then being unable to return because these gunmen burnt down your village. Imagine not knowing when you will be able to eat your next meal and relying solely on food assistance. For [conflict-ridden Borno, Adamawa and Yobe](#) states in Northeast Nigeria, **8.7 million** people are [food insecure](#) and **4.4 million** people are facing **acute hunger**. The violent conflicts in the region have led to the loss of livelihoods and homes for many families, resulting in the internal displacement of **over 2 million** people. Simultaneously, this has resulted in an intensifying hunger crisis in Northeast Nigeria.

Hunger begets more hunger

Over the past two decades, agricultural stressors effected by climate change have complicated Northeast Nigeria's already complex vegetation. This is evident in reduced crop production and unavailability of nutritious food. In 2009, Northeast Nigeria's food struggle was heightened by attacks from [Boko Haram](#) and violent conflicts between farmers and ["herdsmen"](#). Then in 2019, the **Covid-19** pandemic exacerbated hunger in the region due to reduced agricultural production, trade restrictions and supply chain disruptions. Clearly, food insecurity in Northeast Nigeria has worsened over the past few years and continues to force many vulnerable people into hunger.

Hunger is preventable through sustainable food systems

The harsh conditions plaguing Northeast Nigeria have resulted in families losing their ability to grow food, feed themselves and yield income-earning crops for harvests. Despite many interventions, hunger persists, highlighting the need for longer-term solutions that are sustainable, reduce hunger and promote resilience. These solutions will allow families to feed without being solely reliant on food assistance.

The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development will implement two new agricultural policy actions over the next year. These are aimed at building sustainable food systems in Northeast Nigeria.

1. Greenhouse initiative for growing food all year round

For many displaced families and vulnerable farmers in Northeast Nigeria, the ability to grow nutritious food all through the year will save many lives and reduce hunger. Many families in Kenya and [Zambia](#) have successfully grown their own fresh produce through hydroponics systems. [Hydroponics](#) is simply a soilless cultivation technique that allows plant growth in arid areas. With Northeast Nigeria's highly arid areas, this initiative will increase access to fresh food for the rural communities and internally displaced persons camps in the region.

2. Eco-friendly cold storages to keep food fresh from farm-to-table

Solar powered [cold storages](#) will be useful in reducing food loss caused by unreliable power supply and low-quality air in Northeast Nigeria. These cold storages will replace the outdated and inefficient food storage techniques prevalent amongst Northeastern Nigerians. The cold storages will have minimal environmental impact by being developed using locally available resources.

Hunger needs to end

The situation in Northeast Nigeria is complex. These projects do not claim to wholly solve all the issues affecting the region but will help alleviate suffering. Without urgent action, the hunger crisis in Northeast Nigeria could descend into catastrophic food conditions – act now!

How you can help

Learn more:

Read more on the situation in Northeast Nigeria [here](#) and [here](#)

[Everything you need to know about food systems](#)

View a [live hunger map](#) of Northeast Nigeria

Donate:

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Write a petition to the governors of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states