

Progress made but Lake Chad crisis is not over, says UN relief chief, urging greater support for region

Despite improvements in the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad region, millions continue to remain dependent on lifesaving assistance, the top United Nations relief official said on Monday, urging greater international support for the region to safeguard the progress achieved.

[“There is still a big humanitarian crisis.](#) [It is] not over despite the progress we have made,” UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock told a high-level humanitarian conference on the region.

Last February, meeting at a UN-backed [conference in Oslo](#), Norway, donors [pledged](#) over \$650 million towards emergency assistance programmes in 2017 and beyond. These resources helped achieve a significant scale-up in the humanitarian response, reaching more than six million people with assistance, and averting a famine in northeast Nigeria.

The humanitarian situation is still bad, but it is better – *Mark Lowcock*

However, humanitarian needs continue to grow and so do the resources needed to respond. Of the \$1.58 billion [required](#) for 2018, only about \$600 million (38 per cent) has been [received](#) (as of 25 July).

“The appeal we had on the humanitarian response plan this year has been generously financed but not to the degree where any of us can be comfortable that we can meet the needs of the people we can reach, still less of those we are still trying to reach,” added Mr. Lowcock, urging additional funding and resources.

Some ten million people across the four countries – Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger – remain [dependent on assistance](#). At the same time relief workers face severe challenges reaching the worst affected due to Boko Haram violence, according to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA).

Overcoming the ‘perpetual cycle’ of urgent needs and lifesaving responses

Alongside life-saving humanitarian response, addressing the underlying cause is vital to ensure lasting solution to the crisis, highlighted the UN relief chief, noting the need to scale up longer-term resilience and development assistance as well as promoting stabilization.

“If we can make more progress with peace building, good governance, the creation of jobs and education opportunities – and the respect of human rights – we work indeed with the underlying issues and this is what we need to do,” he said.

Organized by OCHA and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) together with the Governments of Germany, Nigeria and Norway, on 3-4 September in Berlin, the [conference seeks to maintain the momentum](#) from last year’s [Oslo conference](#) and increase and expand international support.

It is expected to reinforce an approach combining the response to immediate humanitarian needs with addressing the root causes of the crisis in a way that leads to sustainable, resilient development.



UNICEF/Naftalin

Children attend lessons at a UNICEF-supported school in Dikwa, Borno state, north-east Nigeria. The region was under the control of Boko Haram insurgents until the Nigerian army liberated it in February 2016.

Sectoral requirements

Of the sectors desperately needing resources is education, an area that often lacks funds in humanitarian emergencies.

With some one thousand schools reported to have been closed or rendered non-functional due to violence or unrest across the region, ensuring access education “can be both life-sustaining and life-saving,” said Manuel Fontaine, the Director of Emergency Programmes at [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF), in a [news release](#) on Monday.

Where there is insecurity, education can be both life-sustaining and life-saving – *UNICEF official Manuel Fontaine*

“Education supports children and young people’s lifelong learning. It gives them the necessary skills to build a better future for themselves and their families, and to contribute to peaceful and prosperous communities. Yet too often overall humanitarian education funding is lacking in emergencies.”

UNICEF has called for \$41.7 million to meet the education needs of children in the crisis but has received just 8 per cent of this amount in the first half of 2018.

Other sectoral priorities include food security and nutrition; emergency shelter and non-food items; protection; health; water, hygiene and sanitation; and early recovery.