

UN food relief agency chief welcomes progress on anti-hunger programmes in north-east Nigeria

27 January 2017 – The head of the United Nations food relief agency today welcomed the progress made by the humanitarian community and the Government of Nigeria in fighting hunger and malnutrition in the West African country's north-east.

"You can see the tremendous progress achieved in a matter of months," the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), Ertharin Cousin, said in a news release, issued following a visit to Pompomari camp for the internally displaced people (IDPs) in Damaturu, who fled Boko Haram militants in Yobe and Borno states.

"Children who could barely stand just last November are now on the road to recovery. They will continue to require our assistance in the coming months. The work of the international community in Nigeria is not over yet," she added.

By December 2016, an agile response, combining rapid air-and-road interventions, enabled WFP and partners to reach more than a million people in need, particularly in these high risk areas. And while some areas remain inaccessible, organizations are working together to reach as many as 1.8 million vulnerable people in the first quarter of 2017.

At Pompomari camp, which hosts some 2,000 IDPs, WFP provides cash assistance in the form of money credited electronically to mobile phones. The spending helps to stimulate local markets. To prevent and treat child malnutrition, children under the age of five receive a highly nutritious, peanut-based supplement, while pregnant and nursing women receive nutritional support.

But amid concerns over continued funding, Cousin sounded a note of caution. "The world should not wait for babies to die before taking action," she warned, appealing to the international community not to prioritize one hungry child over another.