

# FOOD SECURITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH SYNTHESIS REPORT CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA

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Jordan Burnett, Leah Nadel, Victoria Santiago, and Arline Tarazona

Edited by Lisa Jordan

Spatial Data Center, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey 07940 – ljordan@drew.edu

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## SUMMARY:

While Northeast Nigeria is a relatively fertile land and can potentially feed the entire population, certain factors, such as the unequal distribution of food, increasing populations, environmental shocks and the insurgency of a terrorist group, Boko Haram, have caused food insecurity amongst the citizens.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 4.7 million people are in need of emergency food assistance.<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 3.3 million people were in Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 (Crisis), 4.3 million people were in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency), and 65,000 people were in IPC Phase 5 (Famine).<sup>1</sup> The people directly affected by the Boko Haram conflict are especially in need of humanitarian assistance.

Across the 6 conflict-affected states, Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba, 10.2 million people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2018.<sup>3</sup> 67% of the people in Nigeria are currently living below the poverty line, which indicates that the majority of the people do not earn enough income to support themselves and/or their families.<sup>4</sup> Due to increased market demands, especially from the Sahelian countries, already high food prices are expected to increase further during the March - September 2018 lean season.<sup>5</sup> With Nigeria continuing to be the most populated country in Africa and with an annual population growth rate of 2.61%, measures have to be taken in order to further improve the food distribution and availability for the people.<sup>6</sup> The goal is to achieve sustainable food security, especially in conflict-affected areas.

## BACKGROUND

Nigeria has been facing food and health crises resulting mainly from conflict brought about by the presence of Boko Haram, though climate-related agricultural disturbances are relevant factors.<sup>7,8</sup> In order to revolutionize and strengthen agriculture, Operation Feed the Nation was created in 1976 and classrooms integrated agriculture into the curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Unreliable rainfall put stress on the agriculture and although many other governmental programs were put into place later

in the 20th century, Nigeria has had to rely on food imports since 1991. This reliance was compounded by the extremist group Boko Haram, which became a more well-known threat in Nigeria when open violence broke out in 2009 between group members and Nigerian police.<sup>10</sup> Uprisings intensified throughout northeast Nigeria in the following years under Abubakar Shekau's leadership and the group increased notoriety in 2014 when over 300 young girls were kidnapped.

Attacks by Boko Haram have led to a sense of insecurity around the nation, affecting political, agricultural, and socioeconomic activities.<sup>1,11</sup> In a population of almost 200 million, 4.5 million people are severely food insecure, in stages 3, 4, and 5, defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.<sup>8,12</sup> At least 2.4 million people have also been internally displaced as a consequence of Boko Haram violence. The northeast region is affected most, especially the Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states.<sup>8,13</sup> The Nigerian army made gains against Boko Haram in 2016 with the help of neighboring countries, but in gaining land, they realized the scope of the humanitarian crisis.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, around 146,000 people had been reached by the FAO for aid with the remaining need requiring 8 million USD. A lack of funding has halted the FAO from contributing with seeds and fertilizers as intended. Farming efforts are also obstructed by looting and crop destruction by Boko Haram. The food security is augmented because of Nigeria's population trends. A large portion of the population is young so the population is expected to grow rapidly, though resources are not increasing at the same rate. Already, 2.5 million children younger than five years old suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), resulting in higher susceptibility to death from illness.

In an effort to decrease the crises, humanitarian assistance increased in 2017.<sup>13</sup> Food assistance was provided to 1.6 million people in January and 2.5 million people in November, though it decreased to aiding around 2 million civilians in December. Agricultural support increased in late 2017 as well, assisting more than 2 million people per month.

## GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

### *Rural vs urban*

Nigeria is a fertile region, where the majority of land is suitable for agriculture (74 million of 98.3 million hectares).<sup>14</sup> Anthony McMichael addresses the irony of “poor [yet] high-fertility countries such as Nigeria...the number of people living in urban slums and shanty towns is increasing. Poor and vulnerable communities are at the greatest overall risk to health and physical safety from a change in climate and extremes of weather”.<sup>15</sup> Despite an ability to grow enough food for the population on fertile land, there are factors inhibiting the access to agricultural productivity and distribution of food. Nigeria is impacted by the spread of urbanization, with the following five large urban centers: Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Benin City, and Port Harcourt.<sup>16</sup> The livelihood zones detailed in Figure 1 maps out the primary means of livelihood in the Northeast region of Nigeria: maize, sorghum, cotton, mixed cereals livestock,

millet, cowpea, sesame, irrigated rice, wheat, and vegetables. There is a diverse array of potential livelihoods in the Northeast regions (Figure 1), but that does not necessitate the easy production of these food and economic sources.

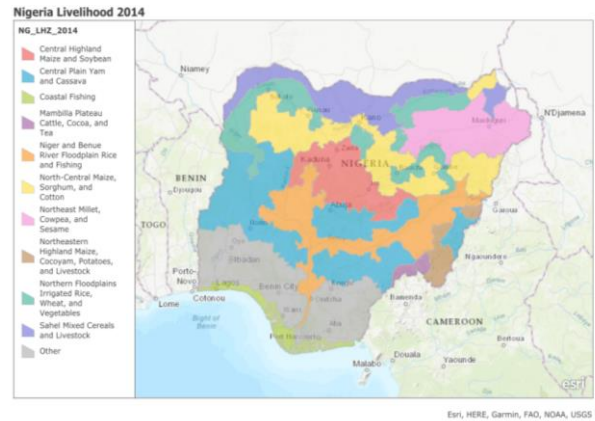


Figure 1: Livelihood for Northeast Nigeria (2014); Source: FEWSNET

### *Religious conflict: Boko Haram*

Boko Haram is a militant offshoot organization that has caused widespread turmoil and displacement in Northeastern Nigeria. Although religiously motivated, Boko Haram seeks to “destabilize the north so that it can one day push out the traditional northern elites who control the government and establish an Islamic caliphate in their place”.<sup>17</sup> Figure 2 locates the distribution of Boko Haram attacks. The locality correlates with the distribution of famine and hunger.

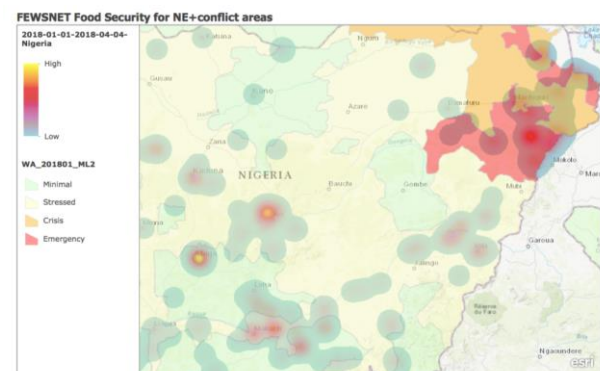


Figure 2: Conflict and food security data for Northeast Nigeria; Jan-March 2018; Source: Armed Conflict and Event Locations Data (ACLED) Project

Table 1 breaks down the relationship between the acute food insecurity phase and the number of fatalities. There is a direct relationship between the increase in food insecurity severity and the ratio of fatalities from armed conflicts. These regional conflict incidences interfere with the production of crops listed in the figure above. It is not a surprise that the unrest caused by Boko Haram has led to changes in Nigeria's economy. There is a clear relationship between how "The deregulation of the nation's economy also set the stage for the sharp decline in farming in the north, as the government disposed of all land and programs they had maintained to support agricultural activities in the area."<sup>7</sup>

Table 1: IPC - Acute Food Insecurity Phase and Number Armed Conflict Events and Fatalities, January - April 2018, Nigeria

IPC-Acute Food Insecurity	Number of Conflict Events	Number of Fatalities	Ratio
Minimal	227	298	1: 1.3
Stressed	125	570	1: 4.6
Crisis	17	95	1: 5.6
Emergency	45	439	1: 9.8

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to continue to improve food security for the people of Nigeria, efforts addressing the political issues surrounding Boko Haram must be made. This problem is affecting the northeast region of Nigeria the most heavily. A large portion of Nigeria's food insecurity stems from issues surrounding Boko Haram. This political unrest has played a role in the economic instability of the nation, which has in turn affected agriculture. Funding from the FAO for seeds and fertilizers should continue and increase. Efforts towards food security must also address the food distribution between urban and rural communities. There should be on going crop assessments made to ensure that the food that is grown is properly distributed. In order to do this efforts need to be made towards funding for a comprehensive national survey so that accurate data of food insecurity and nutrition can be obtained.<sup>14</sup> This will help to get a better

understanding of what areas are in need of aid the most. As well as this, efforts must be made towards urban development and the improvement of roadways. This will help with the distribution of food and supplies to different areas and communities in Nigeria.

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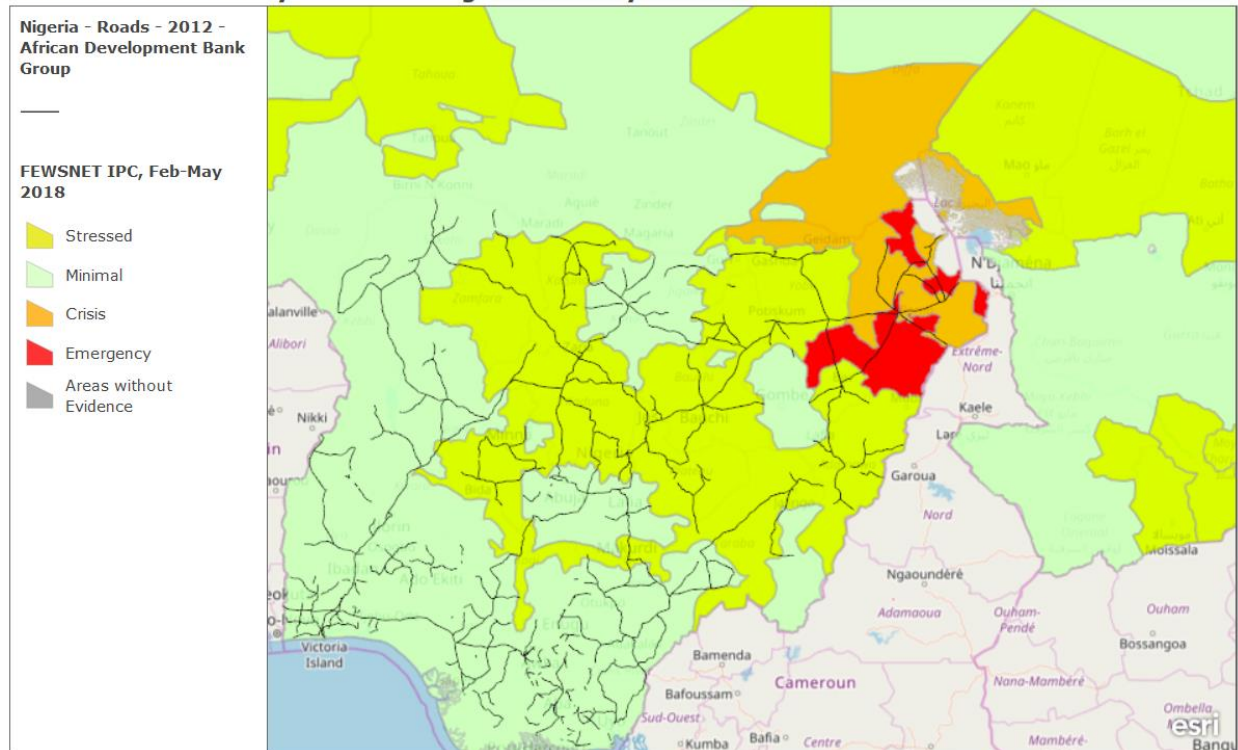
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## APPENDIX

A-1. Roads overlapping with acute food insecurity phases for Northeast Nigeria (available online: <http://arcg.is/9evjf>).

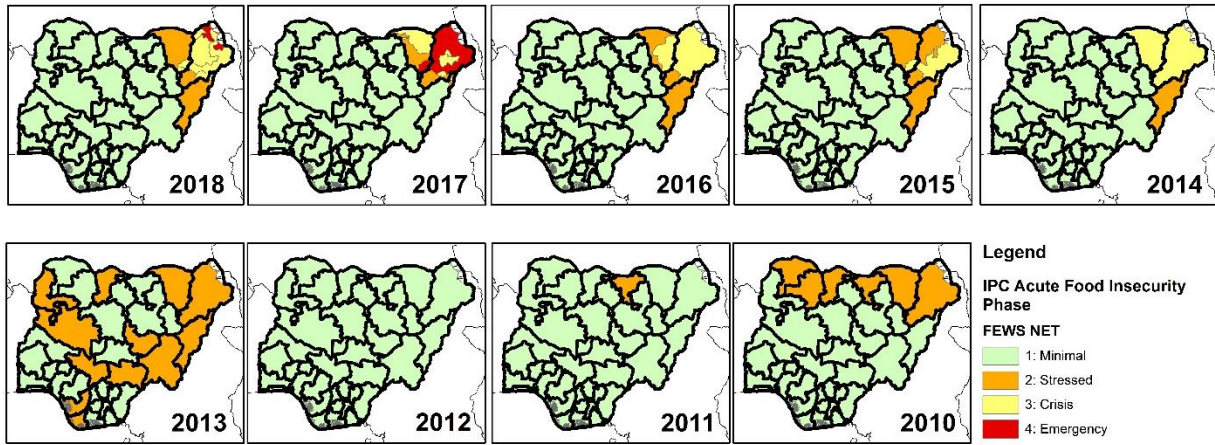
### FEWSNET Food Security Outlook for Nigeria- Feb-May 2018



Food Security Outlook for Nigeria- Feb-May 2018

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA

A-2. FEWS NET IPC Values for Nigeria: 2010-2018 (January, February months)



FEWSNET archival data describe Borno and Yobe states with IPC phase stressed or higher, annually from 2013 - 2018. The January reports for 2011 and 2012 characterize those states as exhibiting minimal acute food insecurity. FEWSNET data are stored regionally, where Nigeria falls into the West Africa region. The contribution of the accompanying data set is to explore acute food insecurity only for Nigeria.