

**Forum:** General Assembly 4 (Special Political and Decolonisation)

**Issue:** Strengthening actions with regard to population displacement in the Lake Chad region

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## Introduction

The Lake Chad region (consisting of Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad) is plagued by political turbulence and drought, resulting in massive population displacement throughout the region. 20 million lives in the Lake Chad Basin are at risk or have already been displaced. The effects of poverty and climate change have already led to 3 million people facing severe food and water insecurity and more than 300,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. Climate change has had a harsh impact on the Lake Chad Basin - what used to be a 25,000km<sup>2</sup> body of water has gradually dried-up and is now an area of less than 2,500km<sup>2</sup>. If the lake continues to recede and dry up, Lake Chad could potentially disappear in approximately 20 years.

To further intensify the crisis, violence and recruitment from Boko Haram (an anti-government Islamist group) since 2002 has forced millions to flee their villages. As a result, out of 20 million people living in Boko Haram affected areas; 9.2 million people are desperately in need of humanitarian assistance. Violence from Boko Haram and military retaliations against the extremist group have displaced 2.7 million people from the four countries in the Lake Chad Basin: there are 2.2 million internally displaced people in Nigeria alone. Families are forced to abandon their livelihoods and flee their homes to seek refuge from the onslaught of attacks. Since 2015, Chad and Niger have declared, and since maintained, a state of emergency.

Mr Stephen O'Brien, the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator called for strengthening actions to the region, "Environmental degradation, poverty, under-development and violent extremism are converging to create a complex and multi-faceted crisis, and only with comprehensive coordination from humanitarian, development and security actors will we be able to deliver for people who are suffering so terribly in Lake Chad."

## Definition of Key Terms

### Population Displacement

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), population displacement refers to the forced movement of people from their livelihoods; this could include their environment, family and occupations. This could be caused by armed conflict, natural disasters, famine, development and economic or political changes. There are generally two types of population displacement: direct displacement (leading to displacement of people from their locations) and indirect displacement (leading to a loss of livelihood).

### Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

Internally Displaced People are those who were forced to flee their homes to seek refuge from war, civil conflict, political strife and/or human rights abuse. However, they remain within the borders of their own country and do not cross any international borders. IDPs are not eligible for the same international protection as refugees as they do not seek asylum from another country.

### Refugee(s)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as people fleeing their home country, from conflict or persecution, to seek asylum from another country. Refugees are protected by an international law (Refugee Protection) that states they must not be expelled or returned to their countries if their life and freedom are at risk.

### Extremism

Extremism is the strong belief of political or religious ideologies far from what most people consider reasonable (Cambridge Dictionary). These extreme values and beliefs are often advocated through illegal, violent or extreme actions. Extremists can drive political turmoil and conflict within a country through harmful and/or fatal actions towards citizens. The Boko Haram group is considered extremist due to advocating their beliefs and discrimination through heinous crimes.

### Insecurity

Insecurity generally means a lack of protection and the state of being vulnerable and open to danger. Insecurity is one of the main reasons for population displacement when people are no longer safe in their homes. 2.5 million people have been made homeless as a result of violence carried out by Boko Haram. Another context for this term is food insecurity, where people do not have a reliable access or a sufficient quantity of food. This is also a reason for population displacement when people lack basic resources needed for survival.

## Sustainable

Sustainable actions cause little or no long-term damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time. Sustainability must be practiced in order to maintain the Earth's resources and natural ecosystems. Reducing our ecological footprint involves reducing waste and carbon emissions. Otherwise, the unsustainable actions humans have been practicing (deforestation, animal poaching, over-extracting water) will lead to a decline in natural resources and an increase in potential health hazards (pollution and unsanitary water).

## Background Information

### Status of the Lake Chad region

The four countries classified as the Lake Chad region are Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon as well as Lake Chad itself. Lake Chad used to be a large body of clean fresh-water before the 1960s, when its volume and area shrunk considerably. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) cites that the lake's gradual disappearance is attributed to unsustainable usage by governments and local communities around the lake. What used to be an economic asset and a source of water to more than 68 million people living in the region is now an ecological catastrophe. The consequences of this crisis stemmed from rapid human population expansion and unsustainable human water extraction include threatening natural species by receding lake levels. In addition to environmental impacts, the shrinking of the lake has triggered arguments over which country has rights to the remaining water, as well as violence amongst the lake's dwellers. The demand for water from farmers and herders to water their crops and livestock results in constant extraction, but fishermen argue for the remaining water to stay in the lake so that there is less strain on a limited supply of fish.

### Niger

Niger has maintained and extended the state of emergency in conflict-affected regions such as Diffa, citing a need for on-going security as population displacement from Niger is due to insecurity. 100,000 people in the South-East Diffa region, in fear of attacks, sought shelter by a highway linking Niamey, the capital of Niger, to the East side of the country. An estimate of the number of IDPs in Niger is 50,000. The army evacuated all islands and they are now completely free of civilians. There has been an increase in the number of Boko Haram attacks on villages since March 2016. Resulting in 70,000 people displaced in the South-eastern Bosso area (Humanitarian Bulletin West and Central Africa).

### Nigeria

The traditional “stronghold” of Boko Haram, north-eastern Nigeria, has been the most affected and is the most concentrated area for violent extremist attacks. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, but 70% of the population lives in poverty due to food insecurity and 80% of women do not have access to education and food and water. Despite recently losing territory in North-eastern Nigeria in 2015, Boko Haram continues to torment civilians and public areas with suicide bombings. A huge part of the population displacement crisis comes from Nigerians fleeing attacks and seeking refuge in their neighbouring countries. The estimate amount of IDPs and refugees in Nigeria is the largest amongst countries in the region at 2.15 million.

### **Chad**

After suicide bomb attacks carried out by Boko Haram militants for example, at N'Djamena on June 15, 2015, the government of Chad declared a state of emergency in areas near Lake Chad. Chad has played an instrumental role in aiding Nigeria in reclaiming areas previously seized in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram. There are approximately 69,000 IDPs within Chad and almost 27,000 people from Lake Chad islands have sought refuge on the mainland. With an influx of refugees from neighbouring countries and IDPs seeking refuge, there has been an increased demand and pressure on resources such as food, shelter, healthcare, and sanitation.

### **Cameroon**

Cameroon, a victim to Boko Haram’s attacks since they began spreading from north-east Nigeria, has agreed to establish a force of 8,700 personnel to combat the Islamist militants, along with Chad, Niger and Nigeria. However, funding difficulties have left the force unable to begin operations. Since 2016, the Far North region of Cameroon has been victim to more than 30 suicide attacks and there are almost 82,000 IDPs. Evacuations were also conducted on the mainland in areas near the water of Lake Chad. Civilians in Cameroon report being forced to follow Boko Haram to the border of Nigeria under the threat of death.

### **Rise of Boko Haram**

Founded in 2002, the extremist group’s main purpose was opposing Muslim participation Western social or political activities (education and voting). It launched military operations in 2009 by seizing a large area in northeast Nigeria and declaring it caliphate (an Islamic state). Boko Haram strongly believes that Muslims are forbidden from participating in political or social activities associated with Western society; such as voting in elections, wearing certain garments or receiving secular education. Targeting civilians in primarily Nigeria and eventually spreading to the rest of the Lake Chad region with ruthless tactics has been the main reason for population displacement throughout the region. 2.5 million people have been made homeless due to the increase in violent extremism and a majority of

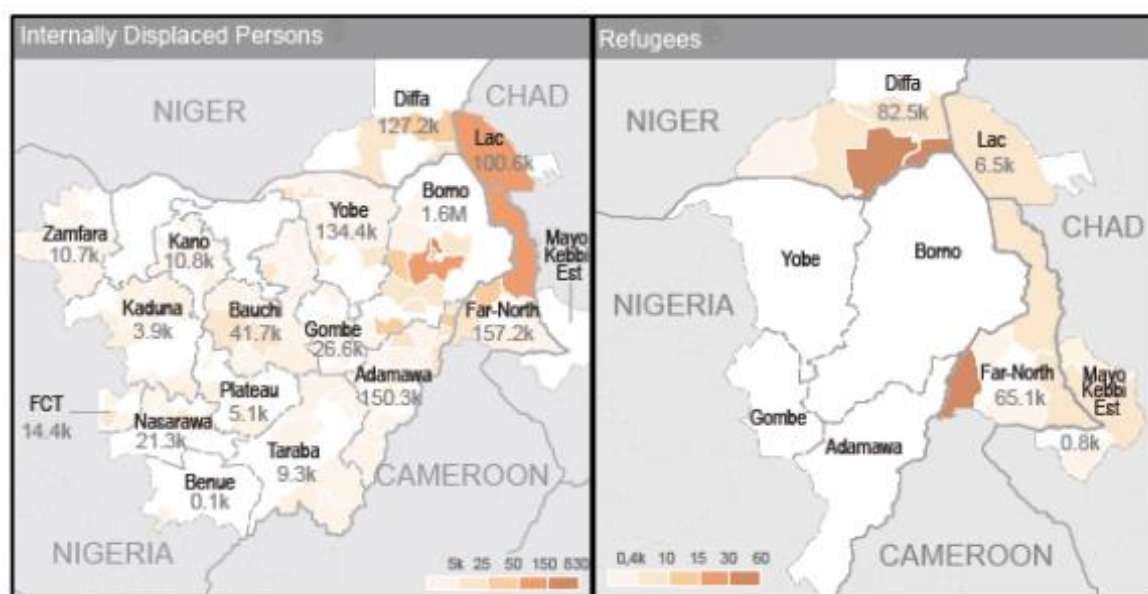
the displaced people do not have access to humanitarian aid for food, shelter, and medicinal care. The extremist group has not been deterred in carrying out their hateful and discriminatory agendas due to fearless followers that would give their lives in a cause they strongly believe in. In regards to recruitment, the group targets young, vulnerable people that would be easily influenced into believing a certain ideology. Many civilians are kidnapped and have no choice in joining the Boko Haram.

## Key Issues

### Sustainability of resources

With the water in Lake Chad rapidly receding, people living in the region have to live through the difficulties of water shortages. People in Gombe, Nigeria, for example, experience frequent water shortages and spend up to three hours in line for a single cup of water. As people are displaced, they often seek refuge in desolate areas, away from violence and turmoil. In these vacant areas, people have a lack of access to basic resources, leading to a life of poverty. 3 million civilians face severe food insecurity and 300,000 children under 5 years suffer from malnutrition. Moreover, millions of people will lose their livelihoods with the receding of Lake Chad. Most lack basic education and only specialize in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors. A source of the receding lake problem is unsustainable human extraction and consumption. Those who use the water for economic purposes, such as farmers and fishermen, may be utilising the water and catching fish species too quickly and not giving them enough time to replenish. In addition, unpredictable rainfall and global warming have made it even more difficult to grow crops.

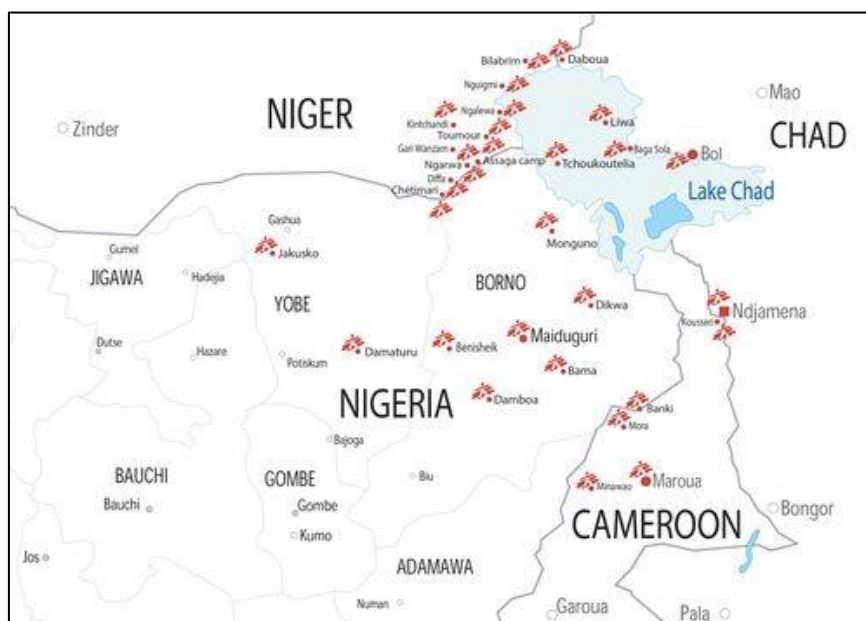
The consequence of this is a reduction in food production and with a decrease in the supply of food; many people are unable to bring food home to their families and face the risk of malnutrition. It is a difficult choice for civilians to choose between leaving to places free from violence (but with less resources) and staying in areas with adequate resources but with the added risk of harmful attacks.



**Caption #1: Map of Population Displacement in the Lake Chad Region**

### Insecurity from violent extremism

Violent attacks have been carried out at markets, religious places of worship, and even schools, creating widespread fear amongst the civilians. Counter-offensive measures from the various governments of the region involve evacuating villages or specific affected areas to allow the military to fight back against the extremist group. This evacuation forces civilians to search, on their own with their limited resources and knowledge, for peaceful places to live. For some, violence could potentially follow them to all the areas they hope to settle in and for most, their original homes would no longer be considered habitable and they would have to search for a place to rebuild their livelihoods again. Furthermore, violent extremism leads to casualties and critically injured civilian bystanders. However, non-governmental organizations, charities and foundations are often unable to reach certain areas that need the most humanitarian assistance due to restricted access.



**Caption #2: Map of Médecins Sans Frontières activities in the Lake Chad Region**

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) is comprised of the four countries surrounding Lake Chad: Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. It was established on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1964, the Republic of Central Africa joined in 1996 and Libya in 2008. The aim of the Commission is to “sustainably and equitably manage the Lake Chad and other shared water resources of the Lake Chad Basin”. It works towards preserving ecosystems, promoting regional cooperation, peace and security across the region. The LCBC partnered with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to gain more information on the environmental degradation of the lake. With the gained information, a ‘master plan’ was drafted identifying issues, constraints and future opportunities; as well as 36 projects. Key projects include: the Lake Chad Basin Program of Sustainable Development, the integrated trans boundary water resources of the Lake Chad Basin, the development of the Charter of water of the Lake Chad Basin executed with the support of the African Water Facility, the Lake Chad Preservation Project and more in the works.

### Boko Haram

The group’s official Arabic name is *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad*, meaning “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad”. Their aim is to promote disassociation with western culture such as secular education, voting in elections and other areas that they consider forbidden. Recently, they have adopted a less common name associating themselves with the Islamic state: Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP). They have claimed responsibility for thousands of attacks the Lake Chad region has suffered. They are the main reason for population

displacement as they feel the governments and leaders in the LCBC directly violate the Prophet's teaching.

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

The UNHCR is actively involved in the Lake Chad crisis and are implementing the agreed upon refugee protection law. The only limitation would be that the refugee protection law does not directly apply to IDPs. The UNHCR has partnered with organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Medical Corps to reach displaced people located in remote locations as well as providing basic items such as buckets, saucepans, plastic sheets, etc. They work towards ensuring displaced people can begin a new life with the required resources and right circumstances.

### **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) / Doctors Without Borders**

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is known in English as *Doctors Without Borders*. This organization focuses on providing medical and humanitarian response to refugees, IDPs, and host communities in the four countries. MSF works in collaboration with the respective countries' Ministries of Health to be able to deliver lifesaving services: healthcare, paediatric, nutritional support, psychological assistance, surgical care and treatment for injured victims of the on-going violence.

### **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

OCHA is responsible for coordinating humanitarian contributions and aid to ensure an effective response to emergencies and crises. This results in greater predictability and accountability during aid contributions. They also assess crisis situations and its needs; setting priorities; and developing strategies such as access to locations, mobilizing funds, public relations and media, and monitoring progress. OCHA plays a key role in the Lake Chad crisis through the transportation of aid to affected areas, distribution of funds, monitoring progress, etc.

### **World Food Programme (WFP)**

The WFP has been actively researching the current crisis in the Lake Chad region and providing its aid and advice through the newfound information. It focuses on food distribution and partners with other organizations such as ACTED to reinforce food and nutritional status of vulnerable people amidst this crisis. They expertise in other areas such as preparedness, analysis, procurement of resources, nutrition, logistics, social protection, disaster risk reduction, and climate change.

### **European Commission**

The European Commission will provide 203 million euros in humanitarian aid to the Sahel region in 2016. Specifically, Cameroon is receiving 2 million in resilience and food and 9 million for the conflict affected population. Chad is receiving 41 million in resilience and food and 9.2 million for the conflict



affected population. Niger is receiving 29 million in resilience and food and 9 million for the conflict affected population and finally Nigeria is receiving 31 million for the conflict-affected population.

## Mercy Corps

The Mercy Corps is a global organization that aids more than 40 countries across the world in disaster relief and humanitarian aid. Mercy Corps focuses on food insecurity; they work towards improving access to food, nutrition information, and connecting local farmers with seeds, livestock, and veterinary services. They also provide livelihood support, such as guiding women to become more involved in decision-making, providing means for families to care for themselves (water, sanitation, food with electronic vouchers). In addition, they plan on introducing long-term solutions to reduce conflict between displaced and host communities in certain areas and also importantly; targeting and supporting youth at risk of joining Boko Haram.

## Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
1960s	<p data-bbox="445 1070 831 1108"><b>Lake Chad begins to shrink</b></p> <p data-bbox="445 1137 1509 1323">Lake Chad's immense body of water began to noticeably recede from the 1960s. The Lake Chad region also experienced a drought during this time period. This desertification would continue to impact the body of water and inflows into the Lake.</p>
22 May 1964	<p data-bbox="445 1384 1166 1422"><b>Establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission</b></p> <p data-bbox="445 1451 1509 1637">Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon united to form a Commission responsible for the shared use of Lake Chad. After seeing it begin to dry up, the Commission focused its efforts on preserving the body of water, its ecosystems and the multitude of species living within it.</p>
1994	<p data-bbox="445 1697 783 1736"><b>Adoption of <i>Vision 2025</i></b></p> <p data-bbox="445 1765 1509 1948">The governments in the LCBC adopted "<i>Integrated River Basin Management. Challenges of the Lake Chad Basin, Vision 2025</i>". This Vision Document aims to see by the year 2025 that Lake Chad is maintained at sustainable levels and all member states of the LCBC has equal access to safe water resources.</p>

### **Boko Haram is formed**

2002 The Boko Haram militant group is formed and they begin promoting disassociation from Western culture. However, they do not pose a threat as of that time.

### **Adoption of *Strategic Action Programme (SAP)* of the Lake Chad basin**

2008 The LCBC adopted the project, *Reversal of Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Lake Chad Basin Ecosystem*. The SAP was created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to assess and analyse environmental damage, as well as working towards restoring Lake Chad to its former glory.

### **Boko Haram violence begin**

2009 The extremist group begins a series of violent discriminatory attacks against civilians and the governments. This would be the start of a cruel conflict affecting the lives of millions, displacing and disrupting their lives.

### **Claim of Northeast Nigeria**

August 2014 Boko Haram seizes territory and declares the northeast region of Nigeria caliphate.

### **States of Emergency**

2015 Boko Haram loses the northeast region of Nigeria with the aid of the Chad and Niger military. However, this leads to a spread of Boko Haram attacks from Nigeria resulting in Chad and Niger declaring states of emergency.

## **Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

- Peace and Security in Africa, 14 January 2009 (**S/RES/1862**)
- Peace and Security in Africa, 23 December 2009 (**S/RES/1907**)
- Threats to international peace and security cause by terrorist attacks, 17 December 2009 (**S/RES/1904**)
- Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, 17 June 2014 (**S/RES/2161**)
- Threats to international peace and security, 19 December 2015 (**S/RES/2195**)

- Integrated River Basin Management, Challenges of the Lake Chad Basin, Vision 2025, 1994
- Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, 16 June 2014 (**A/RES/68/278**)

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Organizations across the globe have reached out to aid in the humanitarian crisis in Western Africa. There are strong presences of humanitarian aid in Cameroon's Far North region, Lake Chad, Niger's Diffa province and north-eastern Nigeria. Humanitarian Response Plans have been put into action such as distributing funds to people in affected Boko Haram areas. The plan places priority on food insecurity and acute malnutrition, protecting refugees, IDPs and local host communities as well as improving basic services and resources. This plan has allowed humanitarian aid to be provided more efficiently and fairly distributed. Moreover, Nigeria received \$10 million and Niger, Cameroon, and Chad received \$7 million (each) from the United Nations Central Emergency Fund to increase humanitarian response in the Lake Chad region. In addition, the Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan provides assistance to Nigerian refugees and host communities throughout the region. These plans provide the much-needed resources and financial aid to IDPs, refugees and the various communities hosting displaced people. The plans can be considered a success as efforts from the locals can be placed on other urgent matters rather than solely on funds.

The UNHCR and the international community (member states of the UN) have adopted the refugee protection law to ensure protection and integration of refugees in foreign countries. A limitation of this protection law is that it solely applies to refugees and not IDPs. This poses a difficulty to the protection and amount of aid IDPs have access to when they are struggling to remove themselves from the violent attacks plaguing their home and while rebuilding their lives.

Resolutions (**S/RES/2161**) and (**S/RES/2195**) condemn violence extremism and suggests the actions that should be taken against all organizations or groups associated with Al-Qaeda as well as placing economic sanctions so that groups' bank and financial assets are frozen. It approves the trans-border security committee in Nigeria against corruption and drug trafficking. It also mentions the implementation of the Counter Terrorism Branch of the UNODC and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to combat extremism throughout the region. The main intentions of past UN involvement involve moral condemnation, economic sanctions and anti-terrorist organizations to secure borders and prevent illegal crimes.

## Possible Solutions

The first step to solving this humanitarian crisis is addressing the root of the issue. Boko Haram's extremist violence is causing millions of people to flee from their home and become displaced in locations with difficult access to necessary resources. **Improving education** through schools and public awareness as to how to avoid being susceptible to Boko Haram's negative influence. Measures to protect schools under Boko Haram threats and to make children and parents unafraid to pursue education could include community watches, rapid response units, and installing communication systems. Demographic analysts claims Nigerians are joining the Islamist extremist group due to widespread poverty across the region. Ending the cycle of poverty would effectively create better living standards as well as decrease support for extremist groups.

A **sub-committee could be created under the UNHCR** to address the situation of internally displaced people that the internationally recognized refugee protection law cannot apply to. An internationally recognized document for the protection of internally displaced people could be created to ensure that these groups of people receive the same basic rights such as protection and asylum. This sub-committee could be put under the care of the member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission or any other states, organizations or leaders / personnel that express passion and interest in aiding in the eradication of violent extremism and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Food security is also an essential factor to solve as this is what already displaced people require to survive and rebuild their lives again. One effective method to distributing food is **receiving non-perishable food items in donations or medicinal items** from organizations, corporations, schools, etc. from all over the world. The donation of more physical items as well as the flow of funds and donations from charities, NGOs and other groups will increase the variety of donations received and people that may be unable to donate money may donate other necessary items.

As mentioned before, NGOs, charities and foundations have difficulty aiding areas with restricted access. Efforts should be placed on **improving access to humanitarian aid** from obstacles such as Boko Haram violence. This will ensure displaced people receive the aid (food, water, clothes, medicine, etc.) they require.

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