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MILLIONS CAUGHT IN NIGERIA'S HIDDEN HORROR, WARNS CHRISTIAN AID

Hunger, terror and destitution are afflicting many millions of people in Nigeria in a huge crisis that remains largely hidden from the world, Christian Aid is warning.

- ***14 million people in need***
- ***Four million people in desperate need of food***
- ***Nearly six million people in need of medical help***
- ***Nearly two million people have fled their homes***

The horror in the north-east of the country has unfolded since Boko Haram terrorists started attacking villages, looting and burning homes and crops and murdering and maiming people.

Some 14 million people now need help, of whom four million are in desperate need of food, according to international charities.

The scale of the crisis in north-east Nigeria is exceeded only by those in Syria, Yemen and South Sudan, yet to date it has received little international media coverage.

At least 1.8 million people have fled their homes and fields to escape the violence, most of whom are sharing the homes of others who have given them refuge.

The true picture is likely to be even worse than currently known, because large parts of the north-east remain cut off by ongoing fighting between Boko Haram and the Nigerian military.

"Families are clinging to life in utterly desperate situations," said Nick Guttman, head of Humanitarian work at Christian Aid, who visited Borno State in October.

"Some of the displaced people I met had homes no more than 30 miles from where they were living in dreadful conditions. They were hungry and just wanted to go home to plant crops and restart their lives – but were too frightened to do so."

He added: "We heard horror stories about how villages were attacked by Boko Haram, with dozens of people killed and injured.

"Most of the houses were burnt down and families have been forced to share shelter, with 20-30 people sharing rooms in some areas. We asked people what they needed most and everyone told us: food."

Christian Aid believes foreign journalists may struggle to get permission to visit the area in crisis. The lack of media coverage is, in turn, hindering humanitarian organisations' ability to raise funds to buy food and other aid.

The charity is calling for humanitarian organisations to be allowed into the camps in which a minority of displaced people are living, to help ensure those people get aid in a timely and dignified way.

Christian Aid is currently helping people in three states: Borno, Adamawa and Gombe. It is focusing support on people who have fled their homes and are living in host communities, who are often forgotten in such crises. Christian Aid is helping both those who have fled and their hosts.

To date, it has reached more than 51,500 people, giving them emergency food supplies and help with clean water and items to help with sanitation and health.

"We desperately want to expand this life-saving work but are running out of money," said Mr Guttman.

Christian Aid has spent almost £1 million so far in north east Nigeria and has received funding from the Dutch Church aid agency ICCO, the Dutch government and the UK government's START Fund.**

Notes to Editors:

***The figures in bullet points at the start of this press release come from the Nigeria INGO Forum, a group of international non-governmental organisations working in Nigeria (of which Christian Aid is one) and [UNOCHA](#).**

****The START Fund is administered by the [Start Network](#), a consortium of 24 leading NGOs, including Christian Aid, working together to strengthen the humanitarian aid system with rapid support where necessary. The network was launched in 2014 with contributions from the UK Department for International Development, Irish Aid and latterly the Dutch government.**

1. Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in around 40 countries at any one time. We act where there is great need, regardless of religion, helping people to live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance in tackling the root causes of poverty as well as its effects.

2. Christian Aid's core belief is that the world can and must be changed so that poverty is ended: this is what we stand for. Everything we do is about ending poverty and injustice: swiftly, effectively, sustainably. Our strategy document Partnership for Change www.christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf explains how we set about this task.

3. Christian Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. Further details at <http://actalliance.org>

Media contact: Amy Sheppey

Spokesperson: Nick Guttman: Head of Humanitarian Programmes