CHILDREN OF THE LAKE CHAD CRISIS

MILLIONS OF BOYS AND GIRLS ARE AT RISK – IN CHAD, WE FIND STORIES OF HOPE AND REDEMPTION ON THE EDGE OF ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST-PRESSING HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS

The numbers of displaced children, refugee children, and children living without access to education in the Lake Chad Region are staggering. Violence in the region has closed 1,000 schools, and educational opportunities for 3.5 million children are at risk.

To put these astounding numbers into context, 3.5 million is about the number of people that live in Connecticut today, and it’s the total population of Uruguay.

One of those 3.5 million children is Ibrahim Mahamadou. Ibrahim could be your son, or your nephew, or your cousin. Bright-eyed and energetic, Ibrahim is seven now. When he arrived in the Dar es Salam Refugee Camp in Chad, it was the first time he’d ever attended school in his life.

“I like going to school because I make a lot of friends. We learn how to read, to write and to count. We play and we get lots of presents too,” said Ibrahim.

With support from a broad international coalition and the Government of Chad, Education Cannot Wait, a newly created global fund for education in crisis, has already reached over 150,000 children like Ibrahim in Chad. This includes 69,000 girls. In the neighboring Central African Republic, the Fund has reached some 65,000 children, including 31,802 girls, and a newly announced US$2.5 million grant will reach some 194,000 displaced children in Nigeria, 52 percent of whom are girls.

“When you look at the scale of this tragedy, we are only scratching the surface. Much more needs to be done if we are going to reduce human suffering and address the root causes of the crisis. Education is an absolute priority and it is the most reliable and sustainable solution to empower a new generation who will be responsible for socio-economic development, peace and stability in the region,” said Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait.

The Fund is currently helping to facilitate the development of a new multi-year education programme by aid organizations in coordination with the Government of Chad to deliver reliable education for the boys and girls enduring the consequences of the rampant violence in the region.

The Lake Chad crisis – affecting the countries of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria – is characterized by ongoing violence, population displacement and migration.

Last year we studied in the tents. When there was too much sandy wind, the teachers used to send us back home. We could not even hear what he said. Now, we study in new classrooms, and we come to school happy.

Kaka Mahamat, 12

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THE LAKE CHAD CRISIS

3.5 MILLION
Children at risk

COUNTRIES AFFECTED
Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria

1,000
Schools closed

9 YEARS
The protracted crisis in the region has lasted more than 9 years

6 MILLION
Children in need of humanitarian aid.

MIGRATION
Hundreds of thousands of families have fled the violence, drought and the real-and-present risk of famine, across the border to Chad from the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Sudan, leaving millions of children in need of educational support.
with friends, we feel safe. When I get older, I would like to become a doctor to look after sick people,” said Aisha.

To support children like Aisha and Ibrahim, Education Cannot Wait worked with Chad’s Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion and UNICEF, engaging through the UNICEF partnership with international NGOs including Fondazione Acra, the Jesuit Refugee Service and Refugee Education Trust International, to support the delivery of sustainable, equitable and inclusive quality education services for children and youth from within the refugee and host communities.

Through a US$10 million grant, community mobilization activities have taken place and classrooms have been built, boys and girls have received backpacks and school supplies, teachers have been hired and trained, and students have begun attending classes – sometimes for the first time in their life.

“Last year we studied in the tents. When there was too much sandy wind, the teachers used to send us back home. We could not even hear what he said. Now, we study in new classrooms, and we come to school happy,” said 12-year-old Kaka Mahamat, who lives now in the Dar es Salam Camp.

TRAINING TEACHERS

Over 2,500 teachers have been trained through the programme, and many teachers received subsidies during a prolonged teacher strike to ensure continued education for children like Kaka.

“They killed my son and burned my house in Nigeria. I really have nothing left there. Teaching helps me to take my mind off things. They say Western education is sinful but I believe every child has a right to education especially learning languages, this is what will help them support their communities.” - Malam Sani, who teaches First Grade in the Dar es Salam Camp.

“Here in Dar es Salam [camp], we have food to eat, we go to school, we play with friends, we feel safe. When I get older, I would like to become a doctor to look after sick people,” said Aisha.

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