

CHAD Food Security Alert

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New civil insecurity constrains humanitarian efforts in the East

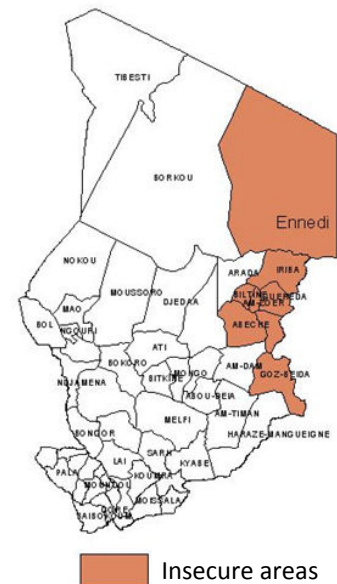
The instability created by banditry and a new outbreak of inter-ethnic fighting continues to undermine the humanitarian situation of some 580,000 people in Chad's eastern zone, a receiving area for refugees and IDPs. This year, humanitarian organizations are being specifically targeted by armed bandits in Adé, Dogdoré, Goz Beida, Iriba, Guéreda, and Abéché (Figure 1), while the November outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict between the Zakawa and the Tama in the Guereda area displaced hundreds of Tama families. This escalation in civil insecurity has weakened the ability of relief agencies to operate in these areas and could jeopardize any improvements in food security for vulnerable population groups resulting from ongoing harvests. Additional aid is needed between now and June 2009, the beginning of the next rainy season.

Given the inadequacy of local law enforcement, the presence of armed groups, and the end of the rainy season, there has been a steady escalation in civil insecurity in eastern Chad over the past few months. Relief agencies have been repeatedly targeted by these armed groups, particularly since September, forcing certain humanitarian organizations to cut back their staff or temporarily suspend operations in certain areas. This, in turn, has limited the volume of assistance and preventive services in these areas, triggering a deterioration in health and nutritional conditions. Global acute malnutrition rates (weight for height Z-score <-2 SD) between July and August of this year were above 10 percent at most of the 12 camps in eastern Chad, reflecting a deterioration compared with figures for 2006. Other problems in this area include shortages of water at certain camps in Assounga department, a country-wide polio outbreak, and a serious outbreak of hepatitis E in Dogdoré, which could spread given the lack of a surveillance mechanism.

Civil insecurity is also threatening harvests and the planting of off-season crops, limiting access to pasture, and disrupting trade in crops and animal products. Continued security problems in this area could interrupt the flow of supplies, affect the pre-positioning of food stores in preparation for the next rainy season, and create shortages once the rains make local roads impassable. With security incidents, displacement, and reductions in the volume of humanitarian aid eroding access to sources of food and income and increasing market dependence, the already high prices of food and other commodities could be driven up even further, threatening the food security of poor and middle-income households.

The World Food Program (WFP) is currently assisting Sudanese refugees, IDPs, and host communities in Eastern Chad, It is also building up a contingency reserve for use in the event of an outbreak of fighting. However, the food pipeline will face significant shortfalls (31,321 MT) by March 2009 and additional funding for the pre-positioning of food stores is needed before the beginning of the rainy season. Emergency interventions (e.g., health care, vaccination coverage, safe water supplies and sanitation facilities) also need to be accelerated. Moreover, even with ongoing emergency humanitarian aid, closer monitoring is needed to prevent a deterioration in the food security of more than 350 Tama families displaced from their homes in November as a result of inter-ethnic fighting which damaged and disrupted their harvests of rain-fed crops and the tending of their cold off-season crops. The recent measures taken by the government and its partners (increasing the number of Chadian troops and the size of the U.N. peace-keeping force, stepping up EUFOR patrols, and exchanges of ambassadors by Chad and Sudan) could improve civil security conditions and access to humanitarian aid. However, other security forces, including the timely replacement of EUFOR troops, whose mandate expires in March of 2009, by U.N. forces, could further strengthen security conditions in this area.

Figure 1. Eastern Chad: Security incident areas (2008)



Source: FEWS NET Chad