

The Impact of Boko Haram and Armed Conflict on Schooling in Cameroon's Far North



Education Sector Rapid Needs Assessment: Far North, Cameroon

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1. Key Findings

In December 2014 UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) carried out a rapid assessment in the 4 departments most affected by the insurgency of Boko Haram in the region of the Far North (*Diamare, Logone et Chari, Mayo Tsanaga and Maya Sava*). Secondary data analysis allowed for purposive sampling methodology to target 110 schools and 93 households in conflict-affected and host communities in the region. Summary results from the assessment on the impact of the conflict on schooling and internal displacement in the region are listed below:

SCHOOL CLOSURES:

- ❖ 120 schools were forced to close in 10 districts of the Far North for the current school year (2014-2015); direct threats from Boko Haram towards school directors and community members were cited as a primary reason for school closures
- ❖ 33,163 children (43% girls) are out of school or have been forced to seek access to schooling outside of their native communities as a result of school closures in affected districts
- ❖ It is estimated that over 29,000 students remain at risk of losing the entire 2014-2015 academic school year as a result of school closures

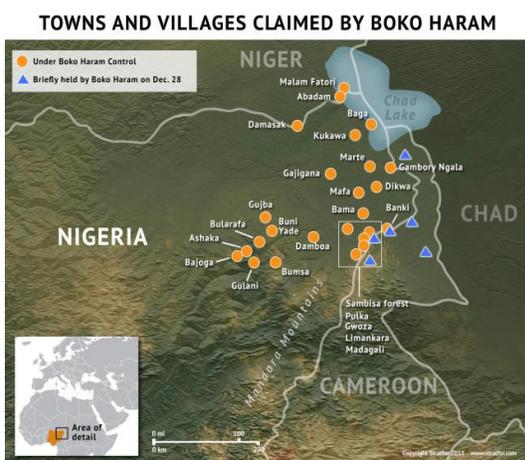
HOST SCHOOLS:

- ❖ 104 host schools (3 pre-primary and 101 primary) accommodating a total of 66,077 students (43% girls) have been identified in 8 districts in the Far North
- ❖ 3,750 internally displaced students (41% girls) have been identified in these 104 host schools

IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

- ❖ 30% of assessed host schools reported being occupied by displaced population since the onset of the conflict
- ❖ 8% of assessed host schools reported being occupied by armed groups since the onset of the conflict
- ❖ 18% of host schools reported having been structurally damaged as a direct result of the conflict
- ❖ 11% of schools reported having been looted or pillaged as a direct result of the conflict
- ❖ 4% of host schools indicate unexploded ordinances and reminisce of war in and around school grounds

2. Context



Since May 2013, attacks by the Nigerian based militant group Boko Haram have intensified along the Cameroon's northwest border resulting in the looting of villages, killing of innocent civilians as well as mass kidnappings, including of children¹. The deployment of Cameroonian and Chadian troops to Cameroon's Far North region has thus far proved insufficient in containing cross-border raids carried out by Boko Haram, which continue to terrorize local communities and has resulted in widespread internal displacement within the region.

The increased presence of Boko Haram, whose name can be roughly translated as “western education is forbidden”² in the Far North poses an immediate threat to the safety and security of students and education personnel in affected communities in the region. Boko Haram has actively called for, and carried out direct attacks on schools in Nigeria, destroying school infrastructure as well as killing and kidnapping students and education personnel³. In Cameroon, since September 2014, 120 schools have been reported closed for the start of the 2014-2015 academic school year which has resulted in over 33,000 students being forced out of school or having to seek access to schooling in host communities within the Far North or Cameroon's southern regions. The conflict has also had an impact on the teacher presence, with 383 primary school teachers reported absent in the region.

Due to security constraints along the Nigerian border and other conflict-affected areas of the Far North, no sectoral needs assessment has been carried out in affected communities to date in order to better understand the impact on schooling in regions directly-affected by the presence of Boko Haram. As a result, little qualitative and quantitative data exists enabling actors engaged in emergency response programming in the region to effectively respond to the educational needs of affected communities.

While it's important to note that the humanitarian context in the region remains extremely dynamic, this assessment aims to provide education sector actors and stakeholders with accurate, reliable data on the impact of Boko Haram and the armed conflict on schooling in the Far North facilitating a more informed, coordinated sectoral response.

¹ <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/boko-haram-claims-territory-northeastern-nigeria#axzz3QIzpn8n>

² <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21640440-jihadist-insurgency-nigeria-turning-regional-conflict-africas>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/14/boko-haram-school-attacks-nigeria>

3. Methodology

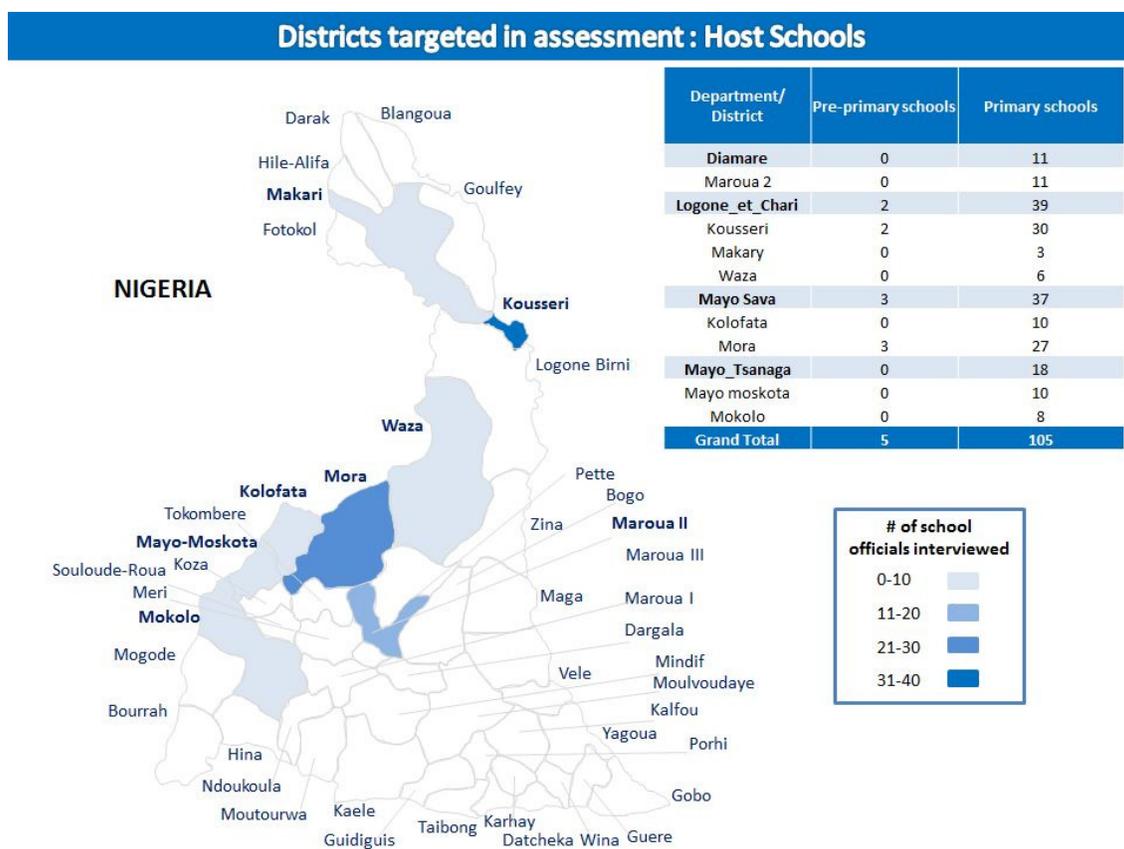
3.1 ASSESSMENT TEAM

A team comprised of 4 members of the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) carried out the field assessment in 4 target departments of the Far North. The assessment team worked in direct collaboration with UNICEF education staff in all technical and logistical aspects of the assessment including planning, implementation and data analysis.

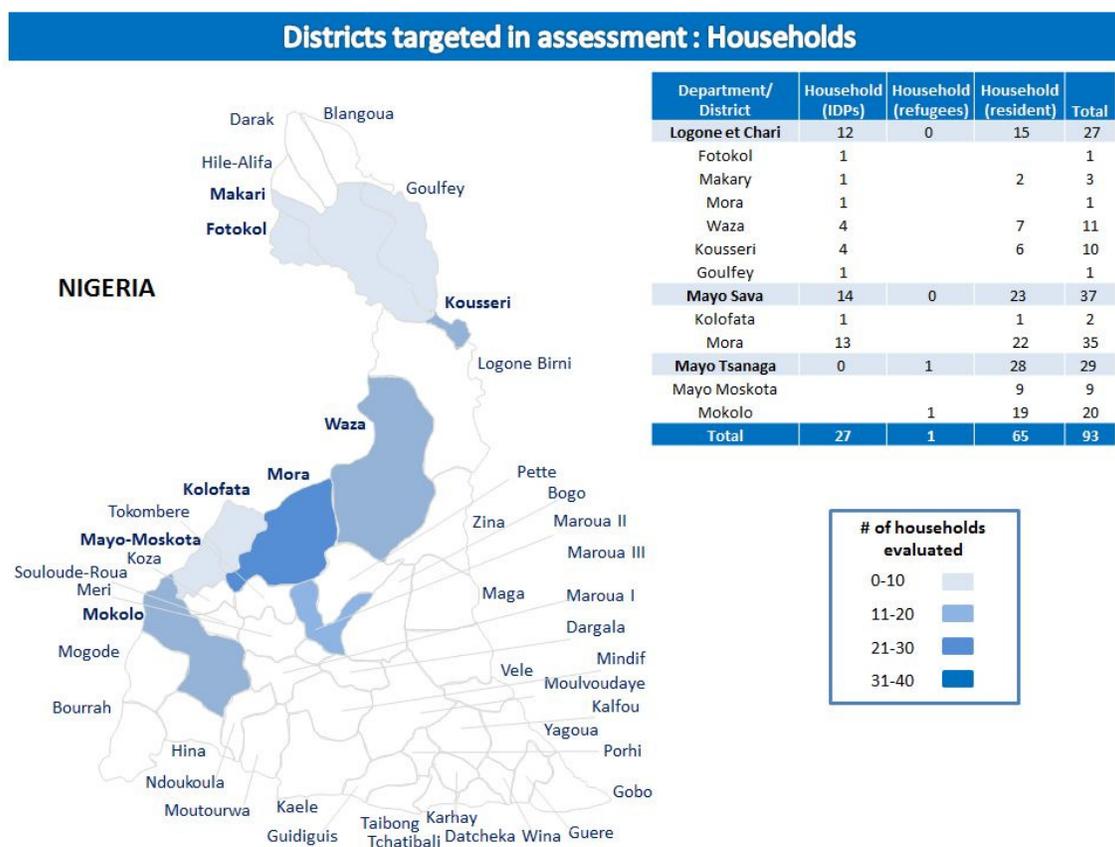
3.2 SAMPLING

To maximize efficiency of the assessment team which was limited both due to operational capacity and security restrictions within the region, secondary data analysis prior to the field mission carried out with regional education officials helped identify priority host communities to be targeted by the assessment. Purposive sampling methodology was utilized to identify focal points of target host schools that were convened in district capitals due to security restriction prohibiting on-site visits to all target schools. Between December 12th and 20th, 2014 the assessment team was able to travel to 10 districts within the Far North, collecting data on 110 schools and visiting 93 households in host communities.

GRAPHIC 1: SCHOOLS TARGETED IN ASSESSMENT BY DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT



GRAPHIC 2: HOUSEHOLDS TARGETED IN ASSESSMENT BY DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT



3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.3.1 ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Two multiple choice questionnaires were developed in collaboration between UNICEF and MINEDUB focal points within the scope of this assessment:

- I. **Schools assessment tool:** Multiple choice questionnaire collecting qualitative and quantitative data in target schools utilizing INEE Minimum Standards domains framework (Access and Learning Environment, Teaching and Learning, Teacher and Other Education Personnel). Key informants for this questionnaire consisted of heads of Parent Teacher Associations.
- II. **Household assessment tool:** Multiple choice questionnaire collecting quantitative data on enrolled and out of school children, and qualitative data facilitating an understanding of constraints and challenges encountered by host community families in educating their children. Key informants for this questionnaire consisted of head of households.

3.3.2 MOBILE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data during field visits was collected via paper surveys, but both school and household surveys were adapted to Magpi (an android data collection platform); enumerators were trained by UNICEF staff in the collection of data via the Magpi

mobile platform. Data was sent following each field visit via Magpi allowing for real-time monitoring of data collection.

Data received via Magpi was analyzed using on-line Magpi analytic functions and Microsoft Excel. Analysis tables for both the household and school survey were shared with Ministry counterparts and results were used to inform strategic planning for the Education Sector in the Far North by the MINEDUB in coordination with the Education Sector Working Group.

3.3.3 LIMITATIONS

Issues related to regional insecurity due to the active armed conflict in the region between Boko Haram and the Cameroonian Military had a considerable impact on the ability of the assessment team to physically visit target schools. As a result, identified host schools based off of secondary data analysis situated in zones of insecurity were not able to be assessed firsthand by the assessment team. School focal points (heads of Teacher Parent Associations) were regrouped in district capitals and interviewed by enumerators. The inability of the assessment team to visit first-hand all host schools included in this assessment impacts data validity. Furthermore, the limited sample size of the assessment in select districts also limits the generalizability of certain findings in this report when analyzed at the district level. Security risks prevented the assessment from targeting the most conflict-affected communities within the region for direct observation, and thus, the state of schools and school-age children in these areas remains limited.

Nonetheless, findings from this assessment provide direct insight on the impact of the armed conflict and Boko Haram on schooling and conflict-affected communities in the Far North. Elements from this assessment should help identify priority schools and host communities in need of direct support, and help inform overall education sector response strategy for the region.

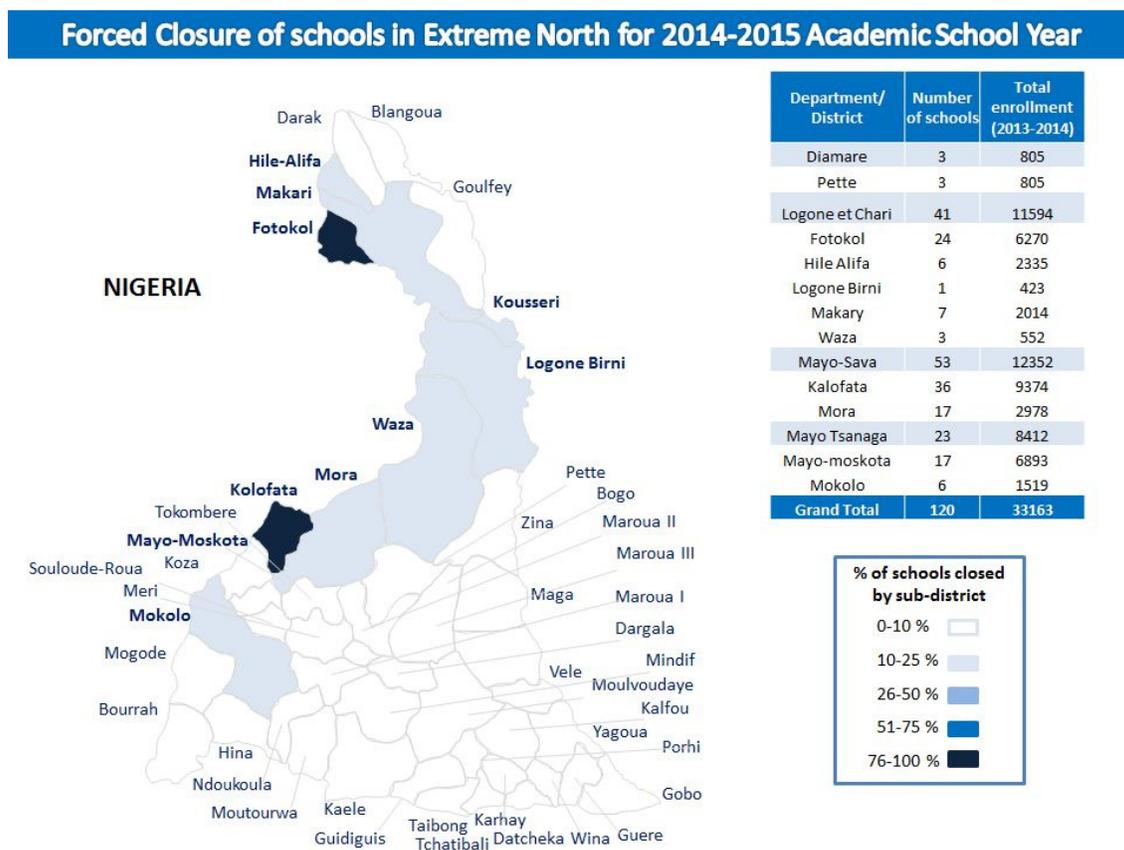
4. FINDINGS

4.1 SCHOOL CLOSURES

An analysis of secondary data provided by regional and divisional MINEDUB delegates indicate that since the start of the 2014-2015 academic school year, 120 schools have been forced to close due to the current conflict with Boko Haram. The Department of Logone et Chari has been the most impacted by the conflict with 41 schools closed, where the district of Fotokol was forced to close all 24 primary schools due to insecurity. School administrators from affected communities along the Nigerian border reported being forced to close their schools as a result of direct threats by Boko Haram militants. Based on 2013-2014 enrollment numbers, 33,163 students in region are either without access to schooling or forced to relocate to host communities to pursue their studies. The assessment identified 3,750 internally displaced students in host schools in the region's 4 departments targeted in the assessment, leaving 29,414

previously enrolled school-age children at risk of being out of school due to the conflict. Regional education authorities report that the large majority of parents residing in rural areas refuse to let their children participate in schooling activities in light of direct threats by Boko Haram militants directed towards those who participate in formal schooling.

GRAPHIC 3: SCHOOL CLOSURES BY DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

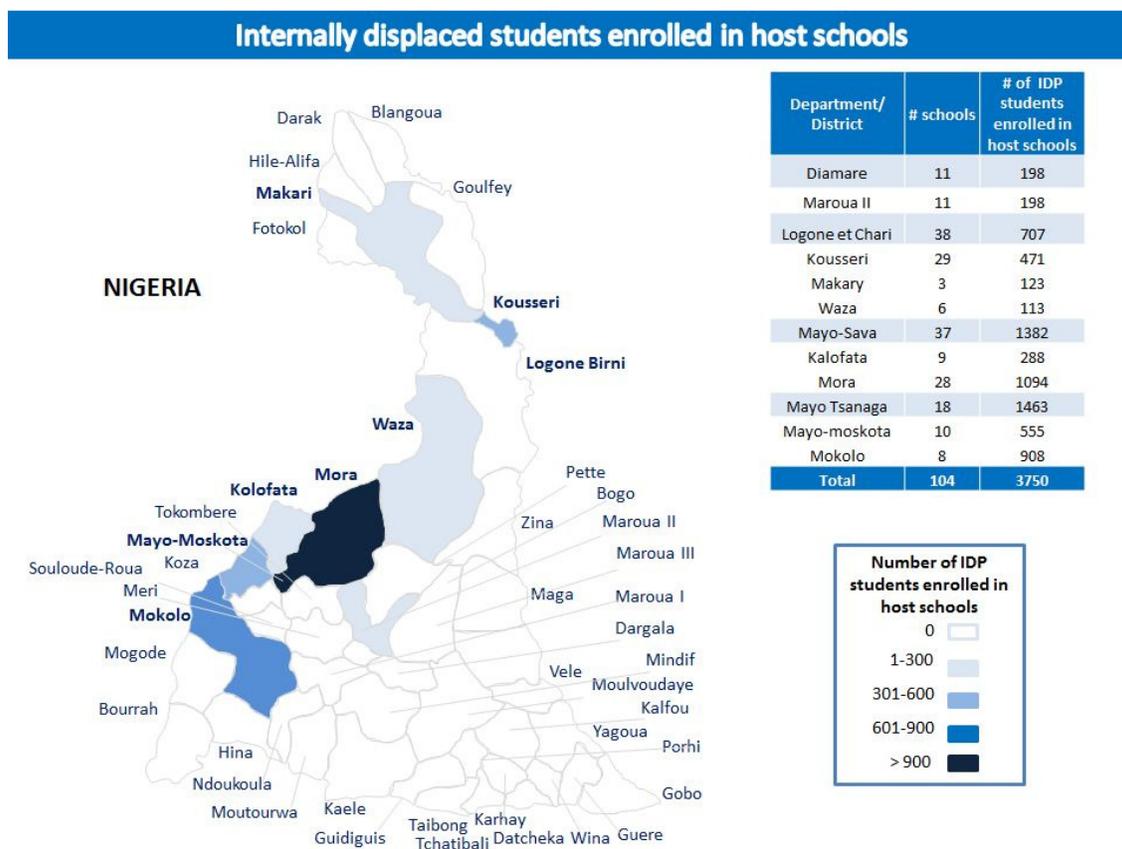


4.2 SCHOOLS HOSTING INTERNALLY DISPLACES STUDENTS

Of the 110 schools targeted in the assessment, 104 schools reported hosting internally displaced students. In total, 66,077 students (43% girls) are actively enrolled in identified schools with 3,750 internally displaced students (41% female) enrolled in 3 pre-primary and 101 primary schools in the 4 districts covered in the assessment. While the influx of internally displaced students globally represents a 5% increase in total enrollment in assessed host schools, certain districts of Logone et Chari (Makary 16%, Waza 8%) noted stronger increases in enrollment of IDP children. Prior to the influx of IDP students, many host schools in the Far North were already operating with limited operational capacity due to structural factors impacting the provision of education in the region of the Far North, which has historically suffered from some of the country’s lowest performance indicators related to education access and quality. It should be noted that of the 33,163 students previously enrolled in the 120 schools

forced to close due to the conflict, the exact location and education needs of over 29,000 children remains unknown. Future assessments should seek to locate these children in an effort to better understand their education and protection needs.

GRAPHIC 4: IDP CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HOST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS BY DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT



4.3 HOST SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

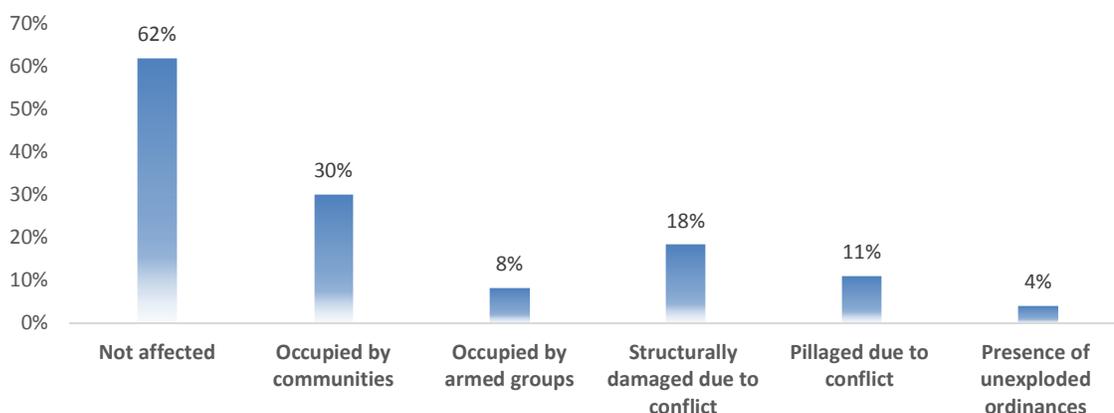
Identified host schools reported a student to classroom ratio of 130:1, or 505 functional classrooms for a total of 66,077 students. This ratio is over double the regional average of 77:1⁴. Additionally, 95% of host schools reported an inadequate amount of school furniture to accommodate currently enrolled children. In terms of water and sanitation infrastructure, 92% of schools reported a lack of school latrines, while 71% of schools reported absence of access to potable water. In the possibility of increased internal displacement in affected districts, the limited absorption capacity of host schools could lead to an increased number of out of school children. The vulnerability of schools in the region, who are faced with structural challenges related to inadequate school infrastructure, has been compounded directly by the conflict due to the occupation, looting and pillaging of schools.

⁴ Annuaire statistique 2009-2010, MINEDUB

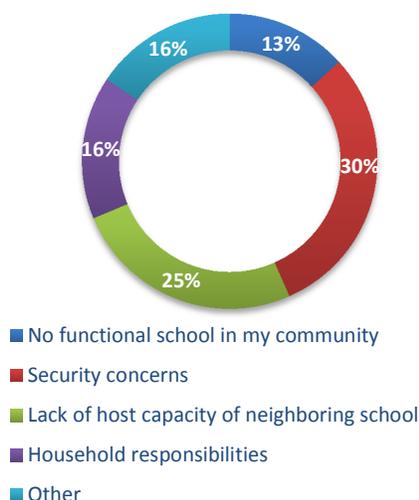
4.4 IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON HOST SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

While all assessed host schools reported being functional at the time of the assessment, 38% of schools reported having been directly affected as a result of the armed conflict in the region. 30% of host schools reported being or having been occupied by community members, while 8% reported having been occupied by armed groups. Furthermore 18% of all assessed schools indicated incurring structural damage as a result of the conflict, with 11% of schools reporting having been looted (loss of school equipment and material). 4% of key informants also indicated the presence of unexploded ordinances (UXOs) in or within the immediate vicinity of school grounds. The presence of UXOs highlights important protection concerns caused by the presence of Boko Haram in affected communities. It should be noted that non-functional schools in conflict-affected districts were not taken into account in this assessment due to security limitations. Future sectoral evaluations should attempt to assess the impact of the conflict on non-functional schools in conflict-affected districts of the Far North.

GRAPHIC 5: IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON HOST SCHOOLS



GRAPHIC 6: PRIMARY REASONS PREVENTING ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN IN FORMAL SCHOOLING IN FAR NORTH



4.5 PRIMARY BARRIERS TO SCHOOL ENROLMENT

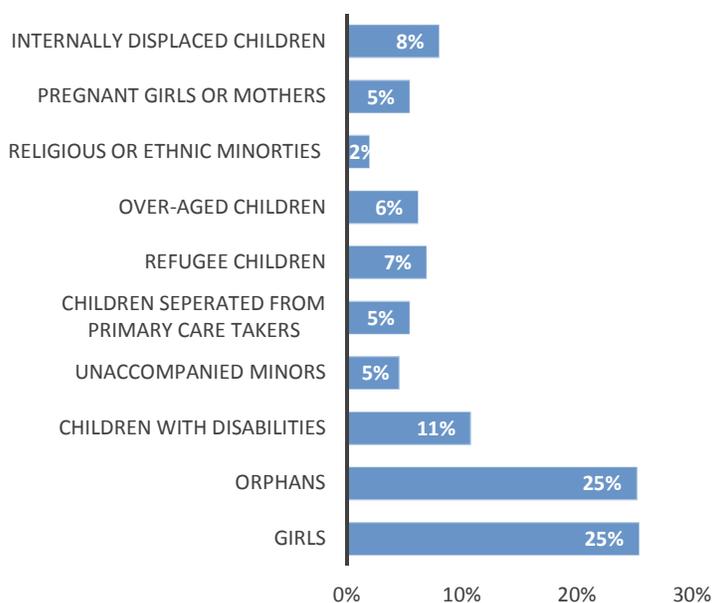
Among assessed households containing school-aged children, 30% reported security concerns related to the presence of Boko Haram as the primary reason for not allowing their children to participate in formal schooling. The second most important factor preventing the enrollment of children was the lack of host capacity of neighboring schools, which could be in part due to the influx of IDP students who have placed an increased burden on the already limited host capacity of these establishments. In

addition to the lack of functional schools in their community (13%), 10% of head of households considered direct and indirect costs related to schooling as a primary factor negatively impacting enrollment of children in formal schooling. This economic pressure could also contribute to the retention of children to participate in household responsibilities (16%), which could also include the participation in income generating activities. Previous sectoral studies in the region would suggest this tendency could be especially true for girls⁵. Future assessments should seek to assess the economic impact of the current conflict on affected communities in the region to better understand its direct and indirect impact on school-age children and their participation in schooling.

4.6 INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SCHOOLING

According to household key informants, along with orphans, girls (25%) were the group most likely to not participate in educational activities in host communities,

GRAPHIC 7: 3 VULNERABLE GROUPS MOST LIKELY NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOLING ACTIVITIES: HOUSEHOLDS



followed by children with disabilities (11%), and internally displaced children (8%). While girls' enrollment in the region of the Far North has been historically one of the lowest in the country, the current conflict could exacerbate structural challenges facing girls' access to education, especially in light of recent targeted attacks by Boko Haram on girl's schooling⁶. Over-age children were also cited by both household and host school key informants as being a vulnerable group least likely to participate in schooling activities. Similarly

to girl's schooling, the increased number out of school over-age children could be indicative of structural issues within the education sector prior to the onset of the conflict, however it's important to note that over-age out of school children are particularly vulnerable within the current context in the region given their increased risk of recruitment into armed groups⁷.

⁵ http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_GirlsEducation.pdf

⁶ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/23/boko-haram-kidnapped-nigeria-schoolgirls-likely-fa/>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/rights/concerns.htm#adolescents>

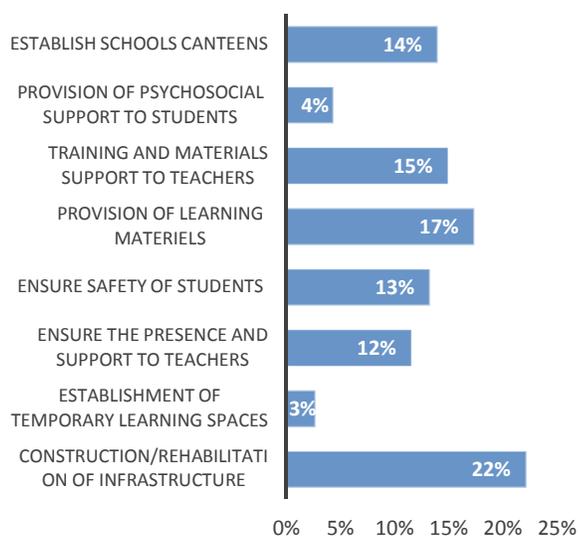
4.7 IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Assessment findings indicate that the presence of Boko Haram and the armed conflict has had a direct impact on the presence of education personnel in the region. Secondary data provided by regional educational authorities indicates that globally, 14% of teachers are currently absent in the departments of Logone et Chari, Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga. The departments of Logone et Chari and Mayo Sava are the most heavily affected by the loss of teachers with both districts reporting 20% of all primary school teachers absent, while the department of Mayo Tsanaga indicates a loss of 5% of primary school teachers for the 2014-2015 school year. Furthermore, security restrictions in the districts in Logone et Chari, Mayo Tsanaga, and Mayo Sava have prohibited motorbike travel in and around rural areas, thus further restricting the ability of teachers to work in schools outside of urban settings in affected districts. The reduced number of teachers available in the region could explain the student to teacher ratio found in assessed host schools which at 116:1, is significantly higher than the national regional average of 70:1⁸. Failure to take measures to effectively ensure the presence, as well as the safety and security of teachers in both urban and rural schools will continue to negatively influence both access to, and the quality of schooling in affected communities in the region.

4.8 PRIORITY ACTIONS FACILITATING ACCESS TO SCHOOLING

Both key informants in schools and households identified the construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure as the most important action that could lead to the active participation of children in formal schooling. Among other priorities key

GRAPHIC 8: 3 PRIORITY NEEDS: SCHOOLS



informants also cited the provision of teaching and learning materials and training to teachers in emergency education thematic issues (*psychosocial support, peace education*) as activities the MINEDUB and education actors could implement to help facilitate greater enrolment of school-age children in host communities. Among other priorities identified by host communities, was implementation of school canteens and the importance of providing children with a safe and secure learning environment.

⁸ Annuaire statistique 2009-2010, MINEDUB

5. Recommendations

MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION (MINEDUB)

- ❖ In partnership with education working group partners, re-activate the regional emergency education sector working group to strengthen sectoral/intersectoral coordination, and information management systems
- ❖ Ensure access to quality schooling in Far North through the redeployment of teachers from closed schools to host schools in priority districts
- ❖ Take appropriate measures to ensure the return and safety of teachers to the Far North, including in zones affected by the conflict
- ❖ In partnership with education working group partners, train teachers in emergency education thematic modules (psychosocial support, peace education and social cohesiveness)
- ❖ In partnership with education working group partners, develop and implement an accelerated learning program in support of children whose access to schooling has been disrupted by the conflict
- ❖ Advocate for the implementation of the Lucens guidelines⁹ indicating that both functional and non-functional schools should not be used for military purposes

UN AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- ❖ In partnership with education authorities, reinforce the host capacity of schools accommodating internally displaced students through the provision of temporary learning spaces, construction of semi-permanent infrastructure, and the provision of teaching and learning materials
- ❖ Establish ECD centers and the distribution of ECD kits in host communities in support of pre-primary school-age children
- ❖ Carry out sensitization campaigns in target communities in favor of the enrollment and retention of children in schooling, especially girls and other identified vulnerable groups, including internally displaced children
- ❖ In partnership with Child Protection actors, establish temporary learning and child friendly spaces and put in place a reference mechanism for children in need of psychosocial support
- ❖ In partnership with WASH partners, reinforce sanitary infrastructure of schools directly impacted by the conflict, prioritizing identified host schools in communities at an elevated risk of Cholera
- ❖ In partnership with all relevant actors and stakeholders, carry out a conflict sensitive sectoral analysis ensuring that strategic response respects “Do no Harm” principles and actively contributes to peacebuilding within target communities

⁹ <http://www.protectingeducation.org/draft-lucens-guidelines-protecting-schools-and-universities-military-use-during-armed-conflict>

EDUCATION SECTOR DONORS/STAKEHOLDERS

- ❖ Increase funding allocated to the education sector for emergency response programming in the region
- ❖ Advocate for the need of greater operational presence of humanitarian actors with technical capacity in emergency education in the Far North