itself without food assistance. In the Lake Chad region, the situation remained as challenging as in previous years. Even with food assistance, around a quarter of the 70,000 Malian refugees in formal camps (17,500 people) were in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) in October–December 2019.

FACTORS DRIVING ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY

Conflict/insecurity

The Niger’s Diffa region of the Lake Chad Basin has experienced violent activity by Boko Haram or Boko Haram-affiliated armed groups since 2014 with the number of security incidents steadily increasing since December 2017 (OCHA, September 2019). Violence has also increased in the western part of the country in Tahoua and Tillabéri regions over the last two years. During the months of April and May 2019, the security environment deteriorated considerably in the border areas with Burkina Faso (OCHA, May 2019). In conflict-affected areas of Diffa, Liptako Gourma, north Tahoua and to a certain extent south Maradi, crop production, trade, markets and livestock mobility were severely disrupted, decreasing food availability (FEWS NET, December 2019).

By the end of 2019 there were 119,500 IDPs in the Diffa region and 80,800 IDPs living in host households in Tahoua and Tillabéri (UNHCR, December 2019). Displaced people faced various food insecurity vulnerabilities because of the loss of their livelihoods. In Tahoua and Tillabéri, community solidarity norms require host households to share their food with displaced persons, significantly reducing the quantities consumed in hosting households (FEWS NET, December 2019).

Meanwhile, the escalating conflict in Mali and Burkina Faso since the end of 2018 led to an increase in the influx of refugees, with the number of Malian refugees reaching 58,000 by the end of the year. In addition, there were 119,500 Nigerian refugees in Diffa, while the new hotspot of community tensions in the states of Zamfara and Sokoto in Nigeria led to 44,800 refugees being displaced in the Maradi region of the Niger (UNHCR, December 2019).

Weather extremes

Generally, the growing season was characterized by medium to good rainfall. However, households in Tillabéri, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder regions faced cereal deficits largely caused by rainfall irregularities, pest attacks and floods, in addition to conflict and displacement. This resulted in a gradual dwindling of cereal stocks and an early reliance on markets (FEWS NET, December 2019).

Floods caused by heavy seasonal rains, which began in June, affected over 211,000 people, destroying crops and livestock. In the last week of August water levels of the Niger basin reached their highest levels since 2012 and overflow from dams in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali contributed