

...day service before returning to Pretoria. They were allegedly intercepted by a ... leader, identified as Theunis Oukamp, at the door.

**Displaced.** According to Unicef, many of the vulnerable children have been displaced by insecurity.

BY AFRICA REVIEW

# 5 million children at risk of waterborne diseases

**CHAD.** Millions of children across the conflict-hit Lake Chad region are at increased risk of contracting waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrheal infections, the United Nations has warned.

Children's agency, Unicef, said in a statement that more than 5.6 million children in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria are facing the disease threat as the rainy season begins.

Many of the vulnerable children have been displaced by insecurity, Unicef said.

The children's agency further said flooding and muddy roads were expected to severely limit humanitarian access to remote areas for several weeks, just as the needs of families rose sharply because of heightened insecurity across the region.

## Made vulnerable

"The rains will further complicate what is already a dire humanitarian situation, as millions of children made vulnerable by conflict are now facing the potential spread of diseases," Unicef regional director for West and Central Africa Marie Pierre Poirier, said in the statement.

"Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene conditions can lead to cholera outbreaks and to hepatitis E, a deadly disease for pregnant women and their babies, while standing water pools can attract malaria-carrying mosquitos. Staving off disease is our top priority," the Unicef regional director said further.

According to the UN children's agency, security concerns had made it difficult to preposition ... in Nigeria ahead of the



**Vulnerable.** Refugees from northern Nigeria in Cameroon's Minawao camp. Unicef says millions of children across the conflict-hit Lake Chad region are at increased risk of contracting waterborne diseases. PHOTO BY AFP

rains and the availability of clean water for large numbers of people returning from Cameroon was another concern.

## Poor governance

In Niger's Diffa region that hosts about 250,000 displaced Nigeriens and Nigerian refugees; "living in makeshift shelters", an outbreak of hepatitis E has killed at least 33 pregnant women so far this year, according to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

The Boko Haram insurgency,

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MARIE PIERRE POIRIER, UNICEF REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

famine, climate change and poor governance have collided to create one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, affecting more than 20 million people across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

According to Unicef, the 5.6 million children in need in the four countries were in varied living conditions from host communities to camps for the internally displaced and refugees.

## Working with partners

The children's agency said it was working with partners in communities at higher risk of cholera outbreaks to teach families about the effects of the disease and practical steps such as hand washing, to help avoid infection.