Conflict Factsheet

Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Locality</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
<td>1970 – ongoing</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon</td>
<td>Fish, Biodiversity, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water</td>
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Local resource competition  
Livelihood insecurity and migration  
Transboundary water management

Conflict Summary

The people of Lake Chad are caught in a conflict trap. Clashes between state security forces and armed opposition groups have become entangled with local tensions over fishing and grazing rights. Meanwhile, climatic changes may bring new challenges for regional cooperation, which underpins human security and ultimately, a viable political solution to the crisis in the Lake Chad region.
Conceptual Model

**Context Factors**

Fish, Biodiversity, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water
Conflict History

The people living around Lake Chad are currently suffering from an intertwined humanitarian and security crisis. Clashes between military forces and armed opposition groups (most notoriously Boko Haram), attacks on civilians, and heavy handed counter-insurgency measures are worsening displacement, food insecurity and eroding of trust in political authorities. Around two and a half million people have fled their homes while five million are food insecure and in critical need of food aid. Tens of millions of people lack adequate services and almost eleven million rely on humanitarian assistance.

Driving factors

The recent growth of Boko Haram is linked to various political, social, economic and ecological developments in Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. Political crises and embezzlement scandals have eroded the legitimacy of governments and institutions and made people more receptive to political promises made by jihadist groups (see Kazeem, 2015). Regional inequalities, in particular between oil-producing and other regions, shape political grievances on which the insurgents capitalise (Watts, 2017). Meanwhile, poverty and lack of adequate services create opportunities for recruiting destitute farmers and herders into armed opposition groups (Onuoha, 2014). Increasing violence against civilians is an incentive for some people to seek the protection from armed militias. In some cases, indiscriminate violence by state security forces could be responsible for the rising support for armed opposition groups (Malagardis, 2014) (see case study on Boko Haram insurgency).

Implications for local communities and inter-community relations

Military responses to the crisis have often undermined local livelihoods, which rely on access to natural resources such as water and land for grazing and farming. By imposing restrictions on trade and mobility around Lake Chad, security forces have impaired local people’s access and control over vital resources, adding to already existing economic pressures in conflict areas (Vivekananda et al., 2019). Resulting disruptions to fisheries, small scale agriculture, pastoralism, and trade intensified competition for local resources and put severe strains on social relations among communities, raising at times the risk of violent conflict between communities (see case study on local conflicts around Lake Chad). Vulnerable groups, including people displaced by conflict and environmental pressures, are most severely affected by these developments.

Challenges to regional cooperation

Water availability and distribution are critical issues underpinning human security and national economic interests in the Lake Chad basin. Changes brought by unilateral development of water infrastructure and irrigation systems have at times led to tensions between riparian states; as have fluctuations in Lake Chad and the emergence of islands with undefined legal status (see case study on inter-state conflict and cooperation). Even though political attention at the moment is on resolving the Boko Haram crisis, underlying tensions over water risk resurfacing in the wake of large-scale water development projects and climate change.

Possible effects of climate change

Pressures brought by climate change could compound the severity of all three conflict dynamics (local, inter-state and related to armed opposition groups). Irregularity in rainfall and erratic weather could make policy and land use planning more difficult and negotiations between competing land users could break
down. More people displaced by extreme climatic events are also likely to seek refuge near Lake Chad (Magrin, 2016). In the past this has led to tensions over entitlements to use local resources. At the same time, environmental changes, may further deprive communities of their livelihoods and essential resources, and potentially lead the latter to join radicalised groups; although this link is more tenuous (Connor, 2017, Onuoha, 2014; Malagardis, 2014).

The strong enforcement of borders and restriction of pastoralist mobility and trade as well as small scale agriculture around the lake undermine the resilience of agro-pastoral and subsistence agriculture systems. This creates additional challenges for coping with the adverse effects of climate variability and change (Vivekananda et al., 2019).

Moreover, tensions between riparian states could escalate in the wake of future shifts in water supply, due to climate change and/or large-scale infrastructure and irrigation projects. Additionally, anticipation of future water scarcity may incite states to pursue further unilateral (and potentially conflict-prone) water infrastructure projects (see case study on inter-state conflict and cooperation).

Resolution Efforts

Over-militarised counter-insurgency measures

Until now, the main strategy employed by Lake Chad governments in relation to the insurgency has been a military crackdown and attempts to thwart insurgents from gaining and strengthening a foothold in the Lake Chad Basin. The militaries of the riparian states have employed the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) under the auspices of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

Although military actions appear to address the insurgency head on, they may fail to tackle the root causes of conflict in Lake Chad and its differentiated political, social, economic and environmental dynamics. In some cases, military actions have lacked foresight and undermined local livelihoods and abilities to cope with climate change (see conflict history).

A holistic approach

Security in the region is likely to rely on a more holistic approach beyond achieving a military victory against armed opposition groups and may involve a political settlement or treaty between conflicting parties (Vivekananda et al, 2019). This implies identifying synergies between environmental, social, and economic policies to achieve long term security, foster sturdy platforms for cooperation and avoid future conflicts. Similarly, solutions on the ground will rely on interstate cooperation beyond military intervention. Foreign Policy may provide support to allow parties to compromise on the key issues.

The international community along with the riparian governments have hosted various meetings to address climate and fragility risks in the Lake Chad region: among them were the 2017 Oslo Humanitarian Conference; the Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region. In 2018 the Abuja Conference to Save Lake Chad; the Lake Chad Governors’ Forum in Maiduguri, May 2018 the High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region.

The Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience sought to consult the Lake Chad Basin Commission, African Union Commission (AUC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
Held in August 2018, it aimed to address underdevelopment, poverty, poor governance and climate change.

**Development and social cohesion**

On the ground, social cohesion is essential for building solidarity between social groups and rebuilding trust in institutions. This could include access to justice and securing access rights to land and broadening people’s access to basic services such as education, health, water, sanitation and energy (ibid; also see case study on local conflicts around Lake Chad). Local institutions in the region need support to strengthen policy, regulatory and oversight capacities, to tackle corruption, to provide quality social service delivery planning and to invest in the expansion of governance at local levels. An mayor challenge will also be to end the prolonged precarity of potential combatants and ex-combatants (Vivekananda et al, 2019).

Livelihoods on the shores of Lake Chad (pastoralism, fishing, subsistence agriculture) all require mobility to adapt and improve resilience to climate change and variations in the lake’s size as well as economic shocks to local markets and trade networks. This requires a critical reconsideration of current military measures that restrict mobility (see case study on Boko Haram insurgency).

**Climate Change adaptation**

Strengthening local knowledge about potential changes could help communities prepare and address climatic variability. Improving awareness and readiness, e.g. through the dissemination of better climate and hydrological information, may help farmers, pastoralists and fisher folk adapt to economic and ecological shocks, while facilitating forward-looking policies, which engage groups who have previously been marginalised.

Local practices could aid both climate change adaptation and stability in the region. For instance, harvesting Typha, known locally as bulrush may improve local livelihood security. Similarly, Spirulina, a nutritious alga, widespread in Lake Chad, is collected and eaten by the local population. Promoting its production could provide an income, especially for women, who were the main beneficiaries of past projects centred on its promotion (Vivekananda et al, 2019).

**Regional cooperation through the LCBC**

Efforts on the ground need to be supported by consistent measures at the basin level. Cooperation between countries around Lake Chad is organised and performed within the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). With the support of a number of international organisations and partners, the LCBC aims to foster regional integration and cooperation, to manage transboundary resources in a sustainable and equitable way and to promote regional security (Maman, 2018). More specifically, it aims to establish water sharing guidelines between the riparian states and looks at the planning of water infrastructure projects, which may have implications for shared resources.

Yet, several factors are still hindering the work of the LCBC: lack of capacities and coordination, the threat of Boko Haram in the region, as well as disputes between member states. Meanwhile, basin wide cooperation is challenged by power imbalances between countries. The riparian countries are far from equal shareholders in the context of the commission which can undermine trust that solutions will always yield mutual and equitable benefits (see case study on inter-state conflict and cooperation).
Country Data in Comparison

Water scarcity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Interval</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Niger</td>
<td>4.42912</td>
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<td>Chad</td>
<td>3.94712</td>
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<td>Cameroon</td>
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Intensities & Influences

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<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International / Geopolitical Intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Suffering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Influences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal Influences</td>
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Violent Conflict

Yes

Salience with nation

National

Mass displacement

More than 100,000 or more than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.

Cross Border Mass Displacement

Best estimate that more than 100,000 or more than 10% of country population are displaced across borders.

Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

There was no reduction in violence.

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been mostly ignored.

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity
Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building
Peacekeeping
Although military action is currently the main means to addressing the insurgency, it may fail to tackle the root causes of conflict in Lake Chad and its various political, social, economic and environmental dynamics. In some cases, military actions have lacked foresight and undermined local livelihoods and abilities to cope with climate change. A critical review of the tactics used to combat armed opposition groups is necessary.

Disarmament, demobilisation & reintegration
Build social cohesion within and among communities. This can be done by providing access to mechanisms for justice and dialogue among people in IDP/refugee camps and host communities, between former fighters and other communities and across different generations. Securing peoples’ right to land can directly contribute to peacebuilding and enhanced social cohesion.

Dialogue
There have been some suggestions to open dialogue between insurgents and governments but they have been overshadowed by an increased military effort.

Cooperation
Cooperation between countries around Lake Chad is organised and performed within the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). With the support of a number of international organisations and partners, the LCBC aims to foster regional integration and cooperation, to manage transboundary resources in a sustainable and equitable way and to promote regional security.

Mediation & arbitration
Disputes amongst the co-riparian states of the Lake Chad are settled with the support of international bodies, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The development of the Lake Chad Water Charter (LCWC) in 2012 sought to define water management and wetland management objectives based on shared concerns. It also sought to define responsibilities to national and regional authorities and create monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms, needed to make agreements enforceable. IUCN is involved, together with the Global Environment fund, the Dutch, British and Nigerian government and the LCBC in designing legal frameworks for water allocation.

Social inclusion & empowerment
Livelihood support needs to be holistic and address all sections of society in order to restore social cohesion and local governance. Interventions must aim to transform underlying social exclusion, inequalities, marginalisation and power dynamics. Moreover, marginalised communities, as well as marginalised people within communities must be involved in dialogues and conflict mediation if those are to successfully address the root causes of resource related conflicts. Social cohesion is essential for building solidarity between social groups and rebuilding trust in institutions. This could include access to justice and securing access rights to land and other resources.
Resources and Materials

References with URL

Kazeem, J. (2015) Nigeria’s ex-minister Okonjo-Iweala is scrambling to save her name from a $2 billion scandal. Quartz Africa
Malagardis, M (2014) Nigeria : «L’armée tue de plus en plus, les islamistes aussi» Libération France
Maman, N (2019) Lake Chad Basin Commission’s Strategies for Preventing Conflict and Ensuring Peace and Security. 8th Session Of The Meeting Of The Parties To The Water Convention High-Level Special Session. United Nations

Further information