Lake Chad Region
Climate-related security risk assessment
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A Report
from the Expert
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on Climate-related
Security Risks

Contents

Executive Summary

Objective: to provide a climate-related security risk assessment and options for climate risk management strategies in the Lake Chad region.

The lake chad region is currently facing multiple security risks, including livelihood insecurity, climate change and violent conflicts. These risks need to be understood as interlinked and affecting each other. Even though the current conflict in the Lake chad region was triggered by violence linked to armed groups such as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lida'awati Wal Jihad (JAS, People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), known as Boko Haram, and Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah (Islamic State West Africa, ISWA), the crisis has deep roots in longstanding developmental challenges. Widespread inequality and decades of political marginalization have instilled an entrenched sense of exclusion and a lack of trust between communities and leaders in the region. These challenges are further exacerbated by climate change. The region has historically been highly vulnerable to significant environmental stress, today, unpredicted rainfall patterns induced by climate change are significantly impacting the resilience of communities around Lake Chad.

The unpredictability of rainfall in combination with conflict and insecurity dynamics, contribute to a number of complex risks to security and stability. This study identifies four current and emerging risks:

1. **Amplified livelihood insecurity and social tensions:** Increasing weather variability was prevalent before the Boko Haram crisis, but most communities were better able to cope or adapt. Today, increased climate variability—characterized by more unpredictable rainfall patterns—is decreasing access to livelihoods, restricting livelihood diversity and weakening resilience, leading to adverse livelihood strategies such as deforestation and sex for food. These pressures are decreasing social cohesion and increasing tensions and conflicts at various levels.

2. **Increased vulnerability to climate risks as conflict and fragility diminish coping capacities:** Conflict has significantly undermined community resilience—including the ability of the population to adapt to climate change. For example, the blocking of access to parts of the lake by Boko Haram and state security forces means that communities have lost significant livelihood diversification options, such as fishing and farming. This reduced coping capacity impedes future interventions and efforts to address climate-related security risks. Conflicts with Boko Haram interact in complex ways with other conflicts, including those over natural resources. These build on, exacerbate and feed into perceptions of marginalization and inequality.

3. **Intensified and increased incidences of natural resource conflicts**: Climate change is exacerbating conflicts between pastoralists and farmers over natural resources, such as land and water. These conflicts decreased in the context of the ongoing conflict with armed opposition groups such as Boko Haram, but have seen a recent resurgence. After the current crisis is stabilized, it is likely that natural resource conflicts will gain in salience and it is uncertain how they will play out in the new context of reduced resilience.

4. **Increased recruitment into armed groups caused by growing livelihood insecurity**: Recruitment into non-state armed opposition groups is increasing and retention rates are being sustained in the face of social and economic inequality,

vulnerable livelihoods and a history of financial incentives to join armed groups. The rise in recruitment and retention rates, and an emerging trend for IDP-returnees to choose to go back to Boko Haram are linked to increased livelihood insecurity. The combined implications of climatic variability, human-induced ecological damage and conflict on livelihood strategies is evolving and needs to be better understood.

In the Lake Chad region, the international community, donors and national governments have been supporting conflict resolution, humanitarian efforts and peacebuilding for more than 10 years. Nonetheless, despite the significant role that climate change plays in shaping security risks – formally recognized by the UN Security Council in March 2017 - there is currently no systematic analysis or process that explicitly assess the compound risks or shaping appropriate responses.

To this end, the report identifies this limitation and provides a preliminary assessment of climate-related security risks in the Lake Chad region. Further, it recommends four entry points to better address climate-related security risks by informing foreign policy, UN decision making and programming:

- **Conduct regular climate risk assessments of foreign policy and security strategies in the Lake Chad region:** Iterative climate-fragility risk assessments of foreign policy and security strategies are required to reorient approaches towards achieving sustainable peace. Current approaches do not factor in climate-related risks and therefore assume greater coping capacities and diminish conflict risks. For example, efforts to contain terrorism do not consider the impact of rainfall variability on recruitment and civilian support for terrorist groups.

- **Report on climate-related security risks to relevant institutions:** To support meaningful international and regional cross-border cooperation it is vital that entities supporting interventions in the region, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the African Union (AU) and the UN Security Council, receive up-to-date and independent assessments of the climate-fragility risks facing the region, and that these institutions are ready and willing to act on these assessments. To fulfil this recommendation, significant efforts are required to improve data collection, analysis and staff expertise on climate-related risks.

- **Coordinate between the stabilization and hydrological arms of the Lake Chad Basin Commission:** In addition to managing the lake's water resources, the LCBC has the security mandate for the lake region under the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF). At present, these functions are not coordinated. Increased knowledge and capacity, as well as formal dialogue and communication mechanisms between the stabilization and hydrological arms of the LCBC would enable the LCBC to fulfil both components of its mandate.

- **Address energy and livelihood security issues in IDP camps to limit deforestation**: The lack of access to energy and jobs in IDP camps is leading people to resort to deforestation, to use or sell wood for charcoal in the absence of alternative affordable fuel or livelihood options. Deforestation is increasing civilian exposure to conflict as people travel in search of shelter. It is also reducing soil fertility and thus agriculture-related livelihood options. To curb deforestation and contain climate-related security risks, sustainable energy and livelihood alternatives should be provided in IDP camps. In addition, their delivery should be integrated into stabilization strategies more broadly.

Climate-related security risks

There is a growing awareness that climate-related security risks are shaping the security context around Lake Chad. However, while the UN Security Council has recognized the need for adequate climate risk assessment and risk management strategies, there have been few analyses to assist in achieving these ends. This report sets out some of the key climate-related security risks facing the Lake Chad region based on the currently available evidence, and identifies entry points to strengthen climate risk management in the region.

The report sets out four key climate-related security risks, provides the context in more detail and outlines the major climate change, socio-economic, conflict and security dynamics that come together to create these risks. This is followed by an overview of the Security Council discussion on the issue and a summary of UN involvement in Lake Chad Four specific entry points to manage and address these risks are identified in the recommendations.

1. Amplified livelihood insecurity and social tensions

Many of the lake's residents make their living by combining fishing, agriculture, livestock farming and trade (see figure 1). While 90 per cent of livelihoods are climate-sensitive, people have until recently been able to switch between occupations in response to lake and climate variations.

However, climate variability and change have strong implications for livelihoods. In particular, uncertainty about future rainfall variability entails significant livelihood risks. Climate variability influences the size of the lake in a context where conflict has diminished coping capacity. In addition, uncertainty profoundly affects populations beyond the lake's immediate vicinity that are less used to coping with climate variation. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether this ecosystem can maintain a rapidly increasing population that has tripled in 40 years.
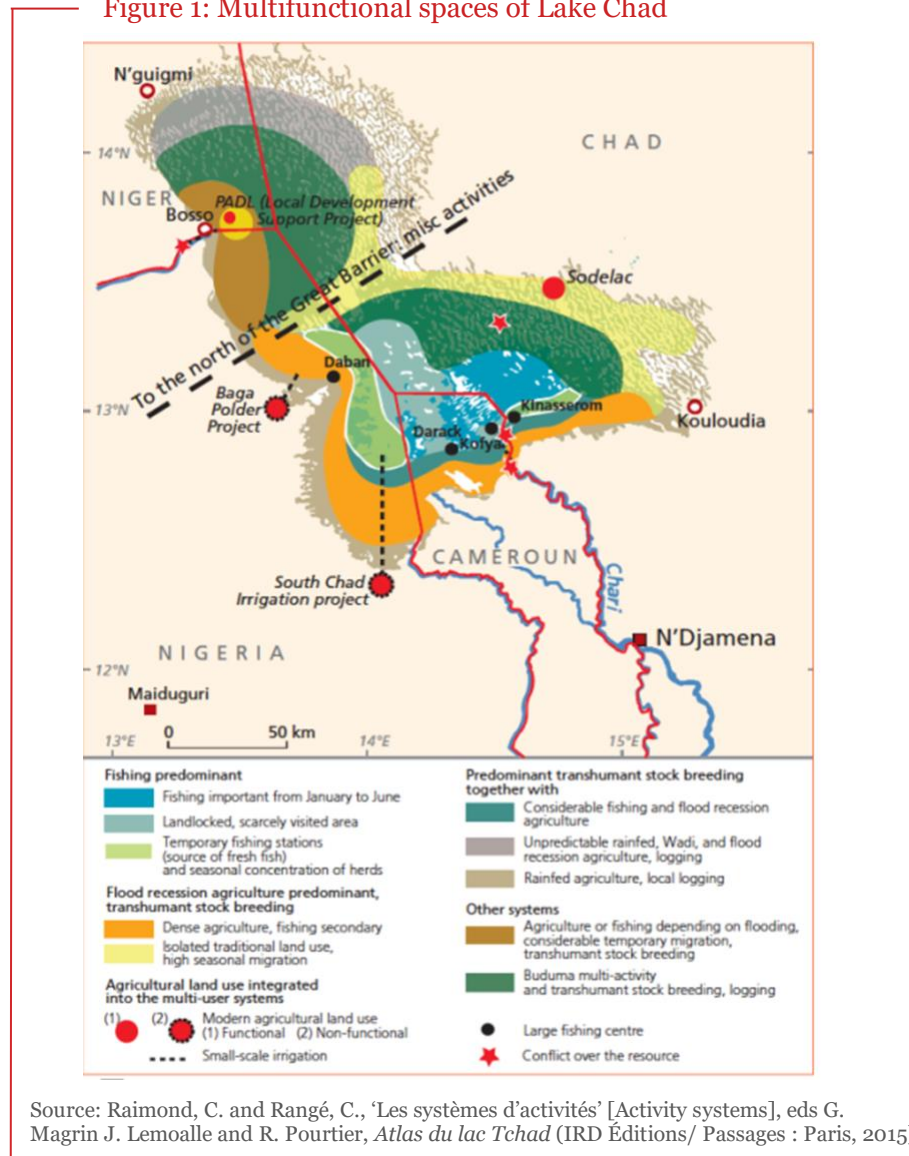
As climate change puts pressure on livelihoods such as fishing and farming, changing cropping patterns, planting times or grazing routes is not always possible. As a result, there has been a clear increase in conflicts over resources such as grazing land and access to water. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, such as compensation, are also no longer proving effective as prolonged cycles of conflict and rainfall variability have depleted people's reserves and thus their ability to pay. Furthermore, while there is no direct empirical evidence linking livelihood insecurity to recruitment into armed groups, ex-combatants widely cite an income and the offer of food as pull-factors for joining.

These pressures are leading to decreased social cohesion and increasing tensions and conflicts at the following levels:

- Family level: exploitative and forced marriages involving IDPs and inter-generational tensions

- Within ethnic and religious groups

- Across and between communities: inter-ethnic and inter-religious

- For communities vis-à-vis government and other informal governance institutions.

Figure 1: Multifunctional spaces of Lake Chad

Source: Raimond, C. and Rangé, C., 'Les systèmes d'activités' [Activity systems], eds G.
Magrin J. Lemoalle and R. Pourtier, *Atlas du lac Tchad* (IRD Éditions/ Passages : Paris, 2015).

Rainfall variability is putting social cohesion within communities under stress, as well as the relationships between different population groups and between population groups and the government. Mistrust and suspicion have been sown within and between communities, such as between Muslims and Christians, as well as individuals and groups that are perceived to be part or supporters of armed opposition groups. This has negative effects on cooperation within and across communities, leaving them less resilient to shocks and pressures. At the same time, traditional governance structures have been ruptured by the conflict as traditional leaders have been killed, moved away or lost the trust of the community, leaving a power vacuum and weakened community leadership.

2. Increased vulnerability to climate risks as conflict and fragility diminish coping capacities

As a result of the conflict, the population's resilience to adapt to climate change has been significantly reduced. This leaves people highly vulnerable to climate shocks, and inhibits their chances of achieving sustainable livelihoods and development, which are fundamental to peace and stability.

First, population groups are faced with increasing restrictions on access to natural resources and livelihoods, such as fishing grounds and agricultural land, by different conflict actors. Shifting livelihoods has been a strategy to cope with climate and weather variability in the past, but this strategy is much less viable when access to land and water is restricted. At the same time, the increasing variability of rainfall and shifting seasonal patterns have also made traditional livelihood practices less viable. For example, local farmers have described how their traditional shifts between different agricultural practices depending on the rain have been unable to cope with the extreme weather events and variability of recent years. The strategies of the military are exacerbating these challenges, for example by restricting or destroying crops that grow above a certain height, such as maize, and clearing forests as part of their counterinsurgency campaigns.

Second, the mass displacement and movement of people has left large population groups extremely vulnerable. They largely lack the basis for their livelihoods, in particular access to natural resources such as land for subsistence agriculture, and are often dependent on humanitarian aid for their survival. Many IDP populations have been displaced multiple times and their ability to cope with future pressures is very low since their financial resources have been depleted by displacement. In the receiving areas, pressure on natural resources has led to increased competition between host communities and displaced populations, as well as the degradation of natural resources, for example through deforestation driven by fire wood consumption for cooking. This is reducing the resilience of both displaced populations and host communities.

Third, the already strained relationship between different population groups and government officials has further deteriorated. Indiscriminate military interventions and human rights abuses by state security institutions have created further distrust. This will impede any future intervention and efforts to address conflict and climate risks.

3. Intensified and increased incidences of natural resource conflicts

Climate change will further increase the pressure on natural resources such as land and water. This might exacerbate a type of conflict that had somewhat decreased in the context of the ongoing conflict with armed opposition groups, but has seen a recent resurgence. In these cases, conflicts emerge, often between different occupational groups such as pastoralists and farmers, around natural resources such as land and water. As the conflict with armed opposition groups decreases, people will attempt to return to their livelihoods and conflicts around natural resources might in turn increase. These kinds of natural resource conflicts also play a role in tensions between host communities and displaced population groups when displaced population groups increase the competition over scarce

resources. This competition can turn into conflict, in particular in the context of ruptured community relationships and dysfunctional traditional governance mechanisms.

As climate change changes the availability of and access to natural resources, it creates new winners and losers. Against the background of the political economy of the conflict—in particular the trend for conflict actors to seek rents and profiteer by controlling access to natural resources, as well as long-standing marginalization and exclusion—these changes in the access to and availability of natural resources pose a significant conflict risk.

4. Increased recruitment into armed groups caused by growing livelihood insecurity

Reports and studies have explored the links between climate change, livelihood insecurity and the vulnerability of population groups. In particular, young men seem to be vulnerable to recruitment by non-state armed groups. The hypothesis is that climate change increases livelihood insecurity and reduces income alternatives. In such circumstances, non-state armed groups can exploit economic insecurity and the lack of prospects by providing economic incentives and alternative livelihoods. A lack of research means that it is unclear at this point whether this hypothesis holds true for the Lake Chad region. However, what can be substantiated is that recruitment is happening in the context of socio-economic inequality and changing livelihoods, where financial incentives have historically been offered by armed groups during recruitment. This is particularly the case for young men who see traditional routes to adulthood and livelihood security blocked, as they are unable to afford marriage in a context where marriage and children play a key role in becoming accepted by the community as an adult male.

Regional Overview

This section provides a contextual analyis of the region, outlining the key dynamics of the climate, socio-political, conflict and security context. This contextual overview aims to help put the risks identified above in context.

Climate context

Lake Chad is located in the Sahel at the southernmost edge of the Sahara, but the lake itself is largely fed by precipitation in the humid tropics further south. This unique geography has created an oasis in an otherwise largely arid region. The Lake Chad basin covers a huge area, constituting more than 8 per cent of the African continent, and features strong diversity in climate, from desert in the north to humid tropics in the south.

The crucial climate vulnerabilities derive from significant uncertainties over variability— and, hence, water availability—at the seasonal, inter-annual and multi-decadal timescales.

Past and current climate: a shrinking lake?

The surface area of Lake Chad is highly variable, intra- and inter-annually. Approximately 90 per cent of the inflow stems from the Chari and Logone rivers, which feed it from the south. With an average depth of only 3 metres, the average intra-annual variation of 1 metre translates into huge variations in surface area between the summer and winter months.

Qualitative data shows that these changes are felt by communities in Lake Chad. The three main climate change implications affecting people's day-to-day lives are:

1. Increased livelihood and food insecurity due to an increase in diseases related to changing temperatures and rainfall patterns affecting crops and cattle.

2. Increased livelihood insecurity and decreased coping capacity to deal with shocks, and increased natural resource conflicts due to more unpredictable changes in lake levels affecting people's ability to plan how, when and what to farm, fish and cultivate.

3. New conflicts over fertile land created by changes in rainfall altering the fertility of different areas of land.

Future climate impacts

Global models predict warming in the Sahel above global warming averages. This will have direct effects on agriculture and human health, and will also increase evaporation from the Lake. Although Global models exhibit some uncertainty regarding future climate projections, the majority—approximately 75 per cent—forecast that precipitation will increase across most of the Sahel, including the areas around Lake Chad, with varied estimations on the scale of the change. This forecast is consistent with historical records, where warm periods have been associated with a greater Lake volume. However, these changes are not anticipated in the coming years or even the next decades.

Between 1990 and 2007, the Central Sahel seems to have become progressively wetter, but there is a high degree of uncertainty about whether this trend will continue. While this might appear to be a positive trend, the uncertainty over and variability of when the rains will come, and how much rain will fall, pose significant risks to livelihood security and subsequently any prospects for sustainable peace and stability in the region.

Most climate models predict increased rainfall coupled with higher inter-annual variability and more frequent extreme events. However, countervailing mechanisms such as a cooling of the Atlantic as a result of accelerated ice sheet melting around Greenland might induce a large decrease in Sahel rainfall. The net effects are unclear at this point but there seems to be a trend towards increasing variability. Moreover, since 1990 extreme rainfall events have become more intense and frequent, increasing flooding risks and making it harder to harvest the water.

Knowledge of the scale and timing of the multi-decadal variations in precipitation is also limited. The current wet period has seen less abundant rainfall than the last wet period half

a century ago, and one important question is whether the next dry period will also be drier than the last, that is whether there is a downward trend, which could be due to a decline in vegetation and a related decline in re-evaporation. At the same time, it is also unclear when that next dry period will begin.

In short, the crucial climate vulnerabilities do not derive from the lake's shrinking, but from significant uncertainties over variability and, hence, future water availability—at the seasonal, inter-annual and multi-decadal timescales. More research is needed to understand the variability of Lake Chad and the interaction between different forcing mechanisms.

Socio-economic and Political Context

The Lake Chad region is characterized by low socio-economic development indicators, low levels of education, high levels of poverty, low levels of national integration, historical governmental neglect, and perceived and actual marginalization. Today, the area is home to approximately 2.2 million people, up from 700,000 in 1976. People have been drawn to the region due to drought and poor livelihoods elsewhere. Over 90 per cent of the population is dependent on livelihoods tied to the Lake's resources and rainfall, leaving them highly vulnerable to any changes in climatic conditions. Projections estimate that the population will reach 3 million in 2025, and that 49 million people in total will be living off its resources. While the Lake itself could support this level of population growth, climate projections predict increased variability and fluctuations in rainfall, which pose major risks on top of existing social and economic vulnerabilities.

In all four basin countries—Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria—the region around the lake is seen as disconnected and peripheral from the political centre, and politicians have largely overlooked the region's development needs. Before the conflict, there was a thriving cross-border trade in agricultural produce, fish and other goods and commodities. Lake Chad was a trading hub, offering economic opportunities and resources of which people living around the Lake took advantage, despite the lack of national government policies to support this. Indeed, many people in the region talk about a total absence of government presence and impact, including a lack of public services, and very low levels of trust in central governments.

This economic activity and the attendant livelihoods have been seriously affected by the current crisis as well as environmental changes linked to climate change. People are unable to fish and farm due to a lack of access to the lake or swathes of land for security reasons, the level of insecurity and the incidence of attacks. Where they can farm, their crops are destroyed or yields appropriated by armed opposition groups. Military restrictions affect which crops they can plant, so that tall crops do not obscure the approach of fighters, when and where they can fish, whether they are able to transport their goods to market and when markets are open. In Niger, for example, emergency measures have restricted livelihood activities and freedom of movement. Vast areas are now militarized and declared no-go zones for civilians, further compounding hunger and malnutrition, and pushing people to adopt new, riskier coping strategies.

Market infrastructure has also been destroyed in many places, including by attacks on marketplaces and storage facilities which are now no longer functioning. The closure of banks and microfinance institutions has undermined savings mechanisms. Cross-border trade in particular has been seriously affected due to the closure of borders. This inhibits the diverse livelihood options that people have traditionally relied on to cope with environmental shocks such as drought and floods, making coping with the current climate change-induced flux even harder. As a result, many in the region, whether displaced or not, are dependent on humanitarian aid, which severely restricts their coping capacity to deal with climate shocks and stresses.

In terms of social groupings, all four countries are pluralistic in nature, consisting of many ethno-linguistic groups. However, while the peoples of Niger and Chad are predominantly Muslim, Cameroon has a Christian majority with a significant Muslim minority and Nigeria has roughly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims. The region has seen youth exclusion and marginalization, particularly in employment, despite its increasingly youthful demographic. Research shows[1] that in the face of few or no prospects, due to increasingly unviable farming, fishing and pastoral livelihoods linked to climate change, young returnees from Boko Haram have re-joined the group as it offers them a better quality of life.

Security context

The rise and containment of armed opposition groups

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lida'awati Wal Jihad (JAS), also known as Boko Haram, first emerged in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in north-east Nigeria, in 2002. Its evolution needs to be seen in the light of a history of radical Islamic movements in the region which, while they took up oppositional positions to the state, tended to be isolationist. The current situation represents both continuities and a break with this past. Originally protesting against the corruption and inequality produced by state structures and calling for a return to a 'purer', more Islamic way of life, the ideology, tactics and strategy of the JAS has constantly evolved. In its early days, the group garnered substantial support from among a population disenchanted with Nigeria's fledgling democracy. While the emergence of the JAS was not directly linked to climate change, it is important to understand that poverty, livelihood insecurity and a lack of state support and governance in the highly climatically vulnerable region was part of the background against which the JAS emerged.

The extrajudicial killing by state security forces of Muhammed Yusuf and approximately 800 of his followers in 2009 led to a temporary retreat from Maiduguri. However, the JAS regrouped and returned to the city, becoming more violent and directing this violence against civilians. The efforts of the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF), a volunteer force of primarily young people, working with the military, led to the JAS being forced out of Maiduguri once again. JAS members went to Borno's rural areas and started to recruit and wage a campaign of targeted killings there: first against government workers, security personnel and Christians and Muslims who spoke out against or and resisted them; and then against the population at large. Over time, the group declared control over territory

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[1] Based on emerging findings from current research undertaken by adelphi and partners under the UNDP-G7 Climate Fragility Risk Assessment of Lake Chad'

and spread to neighbouring countries, carrying out bombings, often by suicide bombers, forced recruitment and kidnapping, and violence against women and girls—including sexual violence and forced marriage.

Attacks have been taking place in northern Cameroon since March 2014 and in southern Niger and western Chad since early 2015. Combatants move freely across national borders. They have some level of support from some local populations in all four countries, although there is also a lot of anger directed against them due to the ongoing tactic of carrying out attacks against civilians.

Operations by the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF), a force consisting of military personnel from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria and based in the Lake Chad Basin Commission, together with local vigilante groups or community self-help militias and the CJTF, recovered the territory taken by the JAS in 2014 and 2015. As is often the case with different factions, the JAS had split into at least two distinct armed opposition groups by 2016: the JAS, led by Abubakar Shekau; and ISWA, led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi.

Current conflict dynamics

The conflict between the Nigerian state, vigilante groups such as the CJTF and armed opposition groups overlays, exacerbates and feeds off already existing dynamics. As well as creating new tensions within and between communities, it has also caused communities to come together against common threats.

In addition to the fighting between security forces, pro-government militias and armed opposition groups, conflict around natural resources between occupational groups such as farmers, pastoralists, fishers and hunters has been exacerbated by decreases in the amount of arable land, the planting of crops on grazing routes and in grazing areas, changing rainfall patterns affecting crop yields and cattle health, military restrictions, security concerns, and the scarcity of water given the numbers of IDPs that have come into an area.

Furthermore, although people of all religions have experienced the impact of violent conflict, relations between Christians and Muslims have become strained in some areas. In others, however, people have united across religious lines against what has been seen as a common enemy as Christians and Muslims have fought jointly in vigilante groups against armed opposition groups.

The conflict has also led to increased ethnic and social tensions linked to the impact on the economy in Cameroon, increased intercommunal tensions and exacerbated violence over access to resources in Niger, and the emergence of new stigmatization and rivalry over the control of economic activities and land ownership in Chad. There has also been particular unhappiness about the position of the Kanuri people, who are perceived as making up the majority of the members of armed opposition groups in Nigeria.

The conflict has affected relations between IDPs and host communities. A concerted humanitarian response was only scaled up several years after the start of the violent conflict. Before that, host communities sheltered and provided assistance to those displaced from other locations. Over time, this has given rise to some tensions as people have exhausted their own resources in order to host IDPs, leaving them and their families in a vulnerable economic position. In recent times, conflict in particular locations and between certain

groups has been noticeable. Tensions have been exacerbated in many cases by the perception that, despite the impact on everyone in the area, humanitarian assistance is only benefitting IDPs.

Violent conflict has affected and changed gender roles in areas affected by violence in north-east Nigeria. Men of fighting age are often the first to flee insecure areas, deliberately targeted and killed by armed opposition groups, viewed with suspicion, arrested and detained by security agencies or involved in fighting. As a result, women make up the vast majority of the adult population in many areas. Consequently, they have taken on new types of economic activity and new decision-making roles. Even if present, men are no longer able to provide for families, which forces women to find ways to earn an income, including through survival sex. There is concern from both women's and men's groups that women's economic empowerment is leading to a change in traditional roles in the home and taking women away from domestic concerns.

Into this mix, there is growing dissatisfaction and frustration with many community leaders. In some areas, they had already lost legitimacy and trust even before the violence began, and were viewed by community members as corrupt and politicized. This had significantly weakened community conflict management systems. These dynamics have been heightened by community leaders leaving the area during the insecurity, and thus being seen as having abandoned their people, as well as their inability to act decisively to stop the violence and their involvement in the diversion of humanitarian aid.

Large-scale disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) processes are yet to start, and there are continued tensions between the families of presumed members of armed opposition groups and the families of those harmed by the violence, leading to widespread suspicion and mistrust in some communities over who may be a sympathizer or member. Women and girls associated with armed opposition groups often face marginalization, discrimination and rejection by family and community members, and are viewed with fear in case they have been radicalized. Although there is less stigma and discrimination attached to being associated with vigilante groups, there are fears about the future trajectories of those involved in such groups, their propensity to become involved in violence and refusal to give up the power associated with fighting. In addition to the ways in which they are perceived by the community, all those associated with armed groups have experienced and/ or participated in violence and are likely to experience continued trauma. The forms that this violence took and the ways in which such trauma will manifest itself will vary greatly for women, girls, boys and men.

Ongoing regional conflict dynamics

Although this report focuses on the situation in and around Lake Chad, it is important to place this analysis in the context of the wider situation and the conflict dynamics that all four Lake Chad countries are experiencing.

Cameroon has seen a recent escalation in conflict and violence in its north-east and south-west regions, marked by violence against Anglophone activists by the security forces, bomb blasts and a declaration of the independence of Ambazonia by secessionist groups.

In **Chad**, already host to hundreds of thousands of refugees from conflicts in neighbouring Sudan and the Central African Republic, clashes between settled farmers and nomads over land use rights and access to water occur frequently in the north.

Niger, with its history of conflict between the state and some of its Tuareg communities, has, due to its geographical location, also felt the spillover effects of conflict in Mali and Libya.

In **Nigeria** new locations of conflict have emerged since its 2015 elections: around the pro-secessionist mobilization by and state reaction to the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) in the south-east; and over the killing by the military of over 300 unarmed members of the Shiite group, Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), and the detention of its leader. The protests against the latter ended in violence, which adds to pre-existing conflicts around oil extraction in the Niger Delta, rural banditry and intercommunal violence.

Violence, human rights abuses and displacement

Almost one-third of the deaths recorded by Nigeria Watch between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2016 were linked to the conflict in the country's north-east between armed opposition groups, state security forces and community defence groups. Given that data is drawn from media sources and the Nigerian media does not report from inaccessible rural areas, the true number of conflict-related deaths in the north-east could be more than twice the number recorded.

Civilians have been targeted by all parties to the conflict. Approximately equal numbers of people have been reported killed by armed opposition groups and the security forces, but the military may have killed three times the number of civilians killed by JAS members between 2010 and 2012, due the number of extrajudicial killings that took place during that time. The JAS mainly undertook strategic assassinations, particularly of community leaders and security personnel, particularly police officers initially then soldiers later on, before the imposition of the state of emergency in 2013.
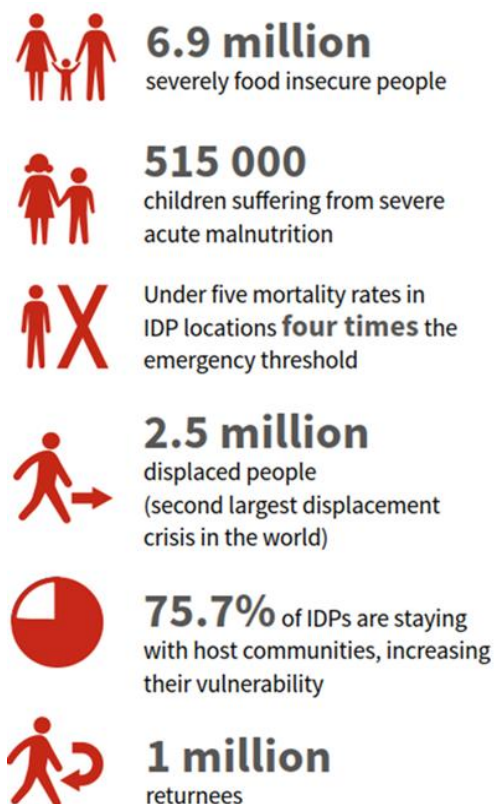
The Nigerian military has failed to protect communities from violence and carried out atrocities on civilians during operations, by directly targeted them using torture and excessive force. In addition to killing civilians and looting and burning property and crops, armed opposition groups have conscripted or systematically executed men and boys, and abducted, imprisoned, raped and forcibly married women and girls who have been made to participate in armed attacks, sometimes on their own towns and villages. Meanwhile, the CJTF in particular has been implicated in extrajudicial killings, harassment of communities,

sexual exploitation and abuse, the recruitment and abuse of children, and the diversion of humanitarian aid. Vigilante groups, which include local hunters, are seen by communities as having committed fewer abuses but there is a lack of empirical research in this area.

There is also significant movement across borders. For example, since early 2015, Cameroon has summarily deported at least 100 000 Nigerians living in remote border areas, and soldiers have used extreme physical violence to do so. At the same time, the army's aggressive screening of Nigerians newly arrived at the border has included torture and other human rights violations, and housing them in remote villages and settlements to which humanitarian actors are denied access.

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FSIN 2018) estimates that 2.5 million people have been displaced in the region (see figure 2), and acknowledges that climate change, alongside conflict and fear for physical safety, have contributed to this displacement. As climate-vulnerable livelihoods have been disrupted, migration has become a common coping strategy.

Figure 2: Lake Chad Basin crisis in numbers

6.9 million severely food insecure people

515 000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition

Under five mortality rates in IDP locations **four times** the emergency threshold

2.5 million displaced people (second largest displacement crisis in the world)

75.7% of IDPs are staying with host communities, increasing their vulnerability

1 million returnees

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Lake Chad Basin Crisis: Response strategy, 2017–2019,* (FAO: Rome, 2017)

Future trajectories

Each of the climate-fragility risks set out above feeds into the others as well as the already fragile context, creating a vicious circle of climate change vulnerability, conflict and fragility. This negative feedback loop threatens to perpetuate the current crisis and makes it harder to move the region away from the path of intractable conflict and fragility.

Any future planning around stabilization, peacebuilding and sustainable development in the region must consider how climate change will interact with future scenarios such as those set out above and plan its responses according. A climate-fragility risk assessment will be an important part of this process.

- **The ability of armed opposition groups to adapt**: Armed opposition groups have shown that they are very resilient and able to change and adapt their identities, strategies, tactics and organizational structures.

- **The future of self-defence militias**: A number of self-defence militias have emerged as a reaction to armed opposition groups. The role they will play in future conflict and fragility dynamics in unclear, particularly regarding whether they will be willing to demobilize and disarm once the threat from armed opposition groups has diminished.
- **Increasing urbanization and resettlement issues**: The movement of people has been primarily from rural areas to urban centres. Key challenges will be providing sustainable livelihoods in urban and semi-urban areas as well as implementing return and resettlement.
- **The role of humanitarian aid and development cooperation**: A large part of the assistance to the region takes the form of humanitarian aid. The predictability and transparency of aid will be critical, as will a move towards better linkages to long-term development cooperation to address the root causes of the crisis.

International Interventions and Support

Conflict in the Lake Chad region began capturing the attention of regional and international peace and security bodies in 2009 when a string of suicide bombings devastated the region. However, since the crisis worsened in 2013—and especially following the abduction of 276 girls from their school in Chibok, Nigeria, which dominated media headlines in 2014—the attention of the international community has grown exponentially. In 2015 the AU MJTF and international troops were sent to the region to assist the governments of Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger and Chad.

The AU and the UN Security Council have worked in tandem with donor countries, including the United States and European Union member states, to stabilize the region. Their approaches have largely focused on containing and limiting the growth and influence of Boko Haram while also responding to the humanitarian situation which has drastically deteriorated in recent years.

Following the 2014 international interest in the Lake Chad region, the United Kingdom, the USA, France, China and Israel have each sent teams of counterterrorism officials and other specialists to Abuja. These teams have played an advisory role to the Nigerian Government in an attempt to free the abducted schoolgirls and strengthen the ongoing work, begun earlier in the 2000s, to train Nigerian counter-insurgency forces. Today, international troops continue to support the regional approach under the AU MJTF.

The attention of the humanitarian community was slow to arrive, leading many to characterize Lake Chad as a neglected or forgotten humanitarian crisis. However, in the past two years the UN, its member states and non-governmental humanitarian organizations have accelerated their efforts. Significantly, on 24 February 2017 Norway hosted the Oslo Humanitarian Summit on Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, together with Nigeria, Germany and the UN. The aim of the summit was to mobilize greater international involvement and increased funding for humanitarian efforts to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. The outcomes included an agreement by donors to address medium-to long-term development needs and identify durable solutions for the people affected, in order to avoid escalating the crisis further.

Current Lake Chad discussions and reporting to the UN Security Council have predominantly focused on efforts to curtail Boko Haram's violence in the region. These include efforts to build capacity in local militaries, disarm and demobilize terrorist fighters and increase the role of women in peacebuilding. Work is also being done to provide emergency relief, particularly food, in response to ongoing food and water stress around Lake Chad. In addition, humanitarian support is being provided to support IDPs.

Status of the international discussion on climate-related risks in Lake Chad

Discussion of climate-related security risks in the Lake Chad region has been gaining traction with governments and non-governmental organizations, as well as the media, in recent years. Following the publication of the *New Climate for Peace ref.*, the G7 working group on climate and fragility risk first discussed the climate security challenges facing Lake Chad in 2016, and then again in 2017 when it recognized a strengthened role for the United Nations. With the G7 Presidency handed to Canada, the working group is expected to continue discussion of Lake Chad in 2018 but the exact process is yet to be determined.

In parallel, in March 2017 the UN Security Council agreed a resolution on Lake Chad that recognized the need for functional climate-related security 'risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations'. Following the resolution on Lake Chad, however, the UN Secretary-General's report on the region did not include any references to climate-related or environmental security risks. This absence strengthened calls from member states and further afield for the creation of independent and UN functions to provide climate-related security risk assessments and management strategies to inform UN decision making and programming.

More recently, in January 2018 a Presidential Statement on the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) reiterated the call for better climate risk assessment and management strategies. The statement also asked for further regional assistance from the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the G5 Sahel. These bodies could provide a conduit for further information on climate-related security risks.

During discussions on the draft statement, several members of the Security Council used the occasion to call for enhanced reporting on the Lake Chad basin, recognizing dissatisfaction with reporting on the region by UNOWAS and the UN Regional Office for Central Africa.

Recommendations

Taken together, these climate-fragility risks create a self-enforcing feedback loop between increasing livelihood insecurity, climate change vulnerability, and conflict and fragility. The recommendations set out below seek to support climate-informed decision making and programming on security-related risks in the Lake Chad region.

Entry points and response priorities

1. **Conduct regular climate risk assessments of foreign policy and security strategies in the Lake Chad region:** Iterative climate-fragility risk assessments of foreign policy and security strategies are required to reorient approaches towards achieving sustainable peace. Current approaches are not factoring in climate-related risks and therefore assuming greater coping capacities and diminishing the risks of conflict. For example, efforts to contain terrorism are not considering the impact of rainfall variability on recruitment to and civilian support for terrorist groups.

2. **Report on climate-related security risks to relevant institutions:** To support meaningful international and regional cross-border cooperation it is vital that those organizations that are supporting interventions in the region, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the AU and the UN Security Council, receive up-to-date and independent assessments of the climate-fragility risks facing the region, and that these institutions are ready and willing to act on these assessments. To fulfil this recommendation, significant efforts will be required to improve data collection and analyses, as well as staff expertise on climate-related risks.

3. **Coordinate between the stabilization and hydrological arms of the Lake Chad Basin Commission:** In addition to managing the lake's water resources, the LCBC has the mandate for providing security around the lake region. At present, these functions are not coordinated. Increased knowledge and capacity, as well as formal dialogue and communication mechanisms between the stabilization and hydrological arms of the LCBC would enable the LCBC to fulfil both components of its mandate.

4. **Address energy and livelihood security issues in IDP camps to limit deforestation, which is increasing climate- and conflict-related risks**: The lack of access to energy and jobs in IDP camps is leading people to resort to deforestation—using or selling wood for charcoal in the absence of alternative affordable fuel or livelihood options. Deforestation is increasing civilian exposure to conflict as people travel in search of shade and shelter. Furthermore, it is reducing soil fertility and thus agriculture-related livelihood options. To curb deforestation and contain climate-related security risks, sustainable energy and livelihood alternatives should be provided in IDP camps, and their delivery should be integrated into stabilization strategies more broadly.

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About this report

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The Expert Working Group on climate-related security risks

The Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks aims to produce high-quality and policy-relevant assessments of climate-related security risks, which can strengthen decision-making and programming on those risks within the United Nations. In 2018, the expert working group – together with external researchers and the working group secretariat – will produce research on four geographies: Iraq, Lake Chad, Somalia and a further geography in Central Asia. The reports will build on research and insights from the field to provide integrated risk assessments of climate-related change and security—as well as other social, political and economic aspects.