



**Issue:** The question of Lake Chad

**Forum:** African Union Peace and Security Council

**Position:** Deputy Chair

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## Introduction

Lake Chad is the largest lake in the Chad Basin. This historically large lake is shrinking due to a combination of dams, increased irrigation, climate change, and reduced rainfall. Lake Chad is surrounded by 4 countries; Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Nigeria. All these countries depend on Lake Chad for the provision of water, and the lake is therefore economically important for the region. The issue discussed at the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) concerns the humanitarian crisis within the region surrounding Lake Chad.

The Lake Chad crisis affects more than 17 million people across eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, western Chad and southeastern Niger. The crisis consists of several problems and is therefore very complex. The region is a target of violence by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, severe malnutrition and near-famine, and extreme poverty. On top of this, the effect climate change has on Lake Chad results in the shrinkage of the lake, and therefore also a shrinkage in water-availability. These problems result in the displacement of more than 2 million people. These refugees are sheltered in communities amongst the poorest in the world. Especially northeastern Nigeria is hit hard by this humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian assistance is necessary in this area, in order to provide the citizens with enough food, increase economical opportunities in the area and protect the citizens from violence, specifically terrorism, within the Lake Chad region. Appropriate measures also need to be taken in order to minimize the impact of climate change on the area. Solving these problems, or taking steps towards solving them, are key to restore peace and order around Lake Chad.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Boko Haram:

Boko Haram is a branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, active in Nigeria since 2009. Since then the organization has spread out to several other countries in West- and Central Africa, including all the countries surrounding Lake Chad. The mission of this terrorist group is to impose strict sharia law as the only law within the targeted countries. The group is responsible for violence and conflict in the area. Since the start of the current insurgency in 2009 Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was ranked as the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015.

### Complex emergency:

The question of Lake Chad can be classified as a complex emergency: an emergency created by both natural and man-made hazards, which can result in displacement of populations and extensive damage to societies and their economies. A complex emergency consists of four 'main' types of instability:

- Political instability produced by conflict and measured in terms of violence levels and fatalities,
- Economic instability reflected by levels of poverty and vulnerability of the population facing increasing income inequality,
- Environmental instability including disasters and long-term shifts due to climate change, both of which are projected to increase with the rising global temperature disproportionately affecting developing countries, and
- Demographic instability observed with urban population growth, complex internal displacement, and epidemics.

### Famine:

A famine is a widespread scarcity of food, caused by several factors including war, inflation, crop failure, population imbalance, or government policies. This phenomenon is usually accompanied or followed by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality.

### Food security:

Food security is defined as the availability of food and one's access to it. A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Stages of food insecurity range from food secure situations to full-scale famine. This widely accepted definition points to the following dimensions of food security:

- Food availability: The availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports (including food aid).
- Food access: Access by individuals to adequate resources (entitlements) for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Entitlements are defined as the set of all commodity bundles over which a person can establish command given the legal, political, economic and social arrangements of the community in which they live (including traditional rights such as access to common resources).
- Utilization: Utilization of food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to reach a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met. This brings out the importance of non-food inputs in food security.
- Stability: To be food secure, a population, household or individual must have access to adequate food at all times. They should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks (e.g. an economic or climatic crisis) or cyclical events

(e.g. seasonal food insecurity). The concept of stability can therefore refer to both the availability and access dimensions of food security.

### Humanitarian crisis:

A crisis that occurs when the human, physical, economic or environmental damage from an event, or series of events, overwhelms a community's capacity to cope. These events can be classified as naturally occurring hazards (geophysical, biological, meteorological, etc.) or man-made hazards such as conflict and pollution.

### Internally Displaced Person(s):

Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but remains within his or her country's borders. There are roughly 2 million IDPs in the Lake Chad region.

### Lake Chad:

Lake Chad is the largest lake in the Chad Basin, and of big importance to the area, as the countries surrounding the basin highly depend on its water supply. Four countries surround the Chad Lake; Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. Concerning the issue discussed in this research report, Lake Chad is used to refer to the regions of the earlier mentioned countries bordering the lake, and not to the lake itself.

### Malnutrition:

Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions. One is 'undernutrition'—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals). The other is overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer). The category 'undernutrition' applies to the situation at hand.

### Terrorism:

The use of violence, intimidation and terror to pursuit a particular ideology, in most cases for political reasons.

## General Overview

The Boko Haram group was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, a group against Western education in Nigeria. A religious complex and Muslim school were soon hereafter established, which attracted a significant number of poor Muslim families from across Nigeria's countryside, and even from neighboring countries in the Lake Chad Basin. Quickly after the establishment of the center, it became a recruiting institution for jihadists, with the ultimate goal of creating an Islamic state. With over half of the population of Nigeria being a practicing Muslim (in comparison with a smaller group of Christians) the group claimed the majority rights of the people. Mohammed Yusuf began to denounce the state and political corruption, which attracted new members to the organization from unemployed citizens. According to the speculations of the public, the entire ideology of founding Boko Haram was rested on the possibility of exploiting public outrage and objection to government's corruption-issues by linking it to Western influence, education and ideology in Nigerian governance, which date back to colonial times.

For the first seven years after the founding, Mohammed Yusuf operated this organization in a (more or less) peaceful way, while constantly recruiting new jihadists. The Nigerian government turned a blind eye to the increasingly militant character of the group up until the year of 2009, when it instigated an investigation into the alleged supply of weaponry to Boko Haram members. The investigation resulted in several arrests of members from the group, which led to the outbreak of fire between the military and rebels in the northern region. The group leader was also killed while in police custody, worsening the outrage of Boko Haram. This marked an offence, which continues to happen till present day. The group's guerilla is characterized by bombings throughout the area and several abductions of (mainly) children and women. In 2014 they kidnapped over 200 girls from a female college in the city of Chikbok and used them as sex slaves or even sold them into marriages prices lower than a dollar. Later in 2014 the violence grew more intense while the group attacked other towns in the northern region of Nigeria. This resulted in the 2015 counter-offensive against Boko Haram by the military of several countries inflicted by Boko Haram's violence. The governments of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Benin and Cameroon, the countries surrounding the Lake Chad Basin, came together with the help of African Union to form a multinational joint task force (MJTF) and managed to temporarily lessen the violence of the group, as well as save thousands of hostages from Boko Haram bases. However, the Boko Haram group, which was named the most dangerous terrorist organization in the world in the year of 2015, even ahead of ISIS, still poses a danger to the safety in these countries. The killings, violence and abuse are still happening all throughout the Lake Chad region. The conflict resulted in, and continues to result in, thousands of deaths, a major humanitarian crisis, critically low food security and high malnutrition rates, and no prospects for a safe and secure future.

On top of this, Lake Chad floods several parts of the basin, making fishing and farming, the way to make a living throughout the area, for the locals impossible. It also floods houses,

causing internal displacement throughout the area. This also has a bad impact on the already unstable economy of the region. Refugee camps are overcrowded, and host communities do not have the capacity to responsibly house these Internal Displacement Persons.

This is Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis. The number of displaced people has tripled in the most affected areas over the last two years. In Nigeria alone, around 1.9 million people have been displaced, constituting the seventh largest displaced community in the world. The conflict produced widespread destruction of infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and farmland. People are trying to flee the violence in search for safety and security. A large percentage of those deceased are direct victims of gun violence. However, increasingly more people are dying due to hunger, spreading diseases and no access to healthcare, the secondary effects of war. The food security in the region is low, and malnutrition rates are dangerously high, especially under children below the age of 5. The solving of the Lake Chad crisis is critical for the increase of stability and welfare in the region.

## Major Parties Involved

### Nigeria

Northeast Nigeria is the region that has been hit the hardest by outbreaks of violence and terrorist attacks by Boko Haram. The conflict results in widespread displacement, violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, protection risks and a deepening humanitarian crisis. Now in its ninth year, the crisis continues to uproot the lives of thousands of children, women and men and is adding to the long history of marginalization and chronic under-development. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, thousands of women and girls abducted and children drafted as so-called "suicide" bombers into the insurgency. Up to 2.1 million people fled their homes at the height of the conflict, 1.7 million of whom are still currently internally displaced and close to 200,000 people are still in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, after having been forced to flee, seeking refuge in countries that can not provide for them with the care they need. 7.7 people are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, of whom more than 50% are children. The security situation in this region very fragile, and this region are considered a high risk to international humanitarian actors, restricting access to vulnerable communities within the area who need help.

### Niger

Niger hosts 252,000 displaced people. 108,000 of these are Nigerian refugees, fleeing the violence in northeastern Nigeria. On top of this there are 129,000 IDPs and a little over 50,000 refugees from Mali. According to the classification of the World Health Organization (WHO), the nutritional situation of children under five years old is severe, and the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate within Niger is 13.7 percent, above the threshold of 10

percent, and the rate of severe acute malnutrition (MAS) has reached 2.5%, well over the 2% emergency threshold. Thus, food security within the area is low, with 162 vulnerable zones, inhabited by more than four million people. The country is prone to epidemics of hepatitis E and meningitis, affecting both the people and the cattle. Most people do not have access to vaccinations against these diseases, and therefore they spread easily throughout affected regions. Floods caused by Lake Chad also heavily affect the country, and more than 200,000 inhabiting Niger. These floods caused the displacement of populations, but also destroyed 9,800 acres of buried crops and are responsible for the loss of 16,000 heads of cattle, worsening the food insecurity within the area.

## Cameroon

Cross-border raids, suicide bombings by suspected members of the Boko Haram group, and the escalation of military operations have forced more than 236,000 Cameroonians in the Far North to abandon their homes, villages and livelihoods. 26,000 of these IDPs are displaced because of the flooding of Lake Chad, caused by climate change. The majority of IDPs have taken refuge with host communities, who share their limited resources with them. On top of this, about 89,000 Nigerian refugees have fled violence in northeastern Nigeria to seek refuge in the far north of Cameroon. Existing infrastructure is insufficient to meet rising needs. Finally, the ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic has displaced thousands of people in the northern and eastern parts of Cameroon. It is estimated that 3.3 million people, more than half of whom are women and children, urgently need basic protection and / or assistance.

## Chad

Chad is facing four key emergencies, consisting of food insecurity and malnutrition, population movements, health emergencies and natural disasters. 20% of the people in Chad are food insecure, of whom more than 3 percent are severely food insecure. The nutritional situation is also alarming, with 350,000 cases of global acute malnutrition expected for children aged 6 to 59 months, of whom 97,000 are severely and acutely malnourished. Chad hosts a large amount of displaced people due to internal and external conflicts. In Chad reside more than 700,000 displaced people, including refugees from Nigeria and other African countries not part of the Lake Chad crisis. A large part of this group consists of IDPs. Communities hosting population movements, estimated at more than half a million, are vulnerable and in desperate need of assistance. There is a high prevalence of epidemic prone diseases, and nearly 1 million people are affected by malaria, the leading cause of infant mortality. This leads to a high morbidity rate within the area. Recurring natural disasters are also a problem in Chad. Floods and droughts, caused by the fluctuation of Lake Chad, have affected 39% of Chads inhabitants.

## Timeline of Key Events

Timeline of events in reverse chronological order leading up to present day.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
<b>2002</b>	Boko Haram is founded by Mohammed Yusuf.
<b>July 26, 2009</b>	The jihadist group Boko Haram started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria, marking the beginning of the Lake Chad crisis.
<b>November 11, 2009</b>	Lake Chad has been labeled an ecological catastrophe by the Food and Agricultural Organization.
<b>August 26, 2011</b>	Boko Haram attacks the United Nations compound in Abuja. A car bomb kills 23 people and injures more than 75 others.
<b>February 2013</b>	The Boko Haram insurgency has spilled over the border into Cameroon.
<b>April 14, 2014</b>	Boko Haram militants kidnap approximately 276 teenage girls from a boarding school in Chibok in Borno.
<b>May 22, 2014</b>	The UN Security Council adds Boko Haram to its sanctions list.
<b>February 2015</b>	The region of Diffa in Niger is taunted by cross-border raids by Boko Haram, causing the region to face an unprecedented security situation.
<b>February 13, 2015</b>	Nigeria's Boko Haram militants carry out the first assault on Chadian soil
<b>February 24, 2017</b>	The UN-backed Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region is held, to seek durable solutions for the crisis-hit countries
<b>June 23, 2017</b>	UNICEF warns for the risk of waterborne diseases as rainy season hits communities affected by Lake Chad crisis
<b>April 13, 2018</b>	UNICEF says Boko Haram has kidnapped more than 1,000 children in northeastern Nigeria since 2013.
<b>August 21 2018</b>	Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calls for support to Lake Chad countries after latest Boko Haram attack.
<b>30 september 2018</b>	Cameroon's president, Paul Biya, says Boko Haram has been defeated in the country

## Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Both the African Union and the United Nations have previously made steps towards solving the issues within the Lake Chad region.

The African Union Peace and Security Council has developed a strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin region. The strategy focuses amongst other things on the critical role of civil society, the African Unions partners (United Nations, international partners etc.) and the technical coordination of this strategy. This strategy has been adapted quite recently, and is expected to run for five years.

The United Nations Security Council has previously passed resolution 2349 (2017) on Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region. The Secretary General also released a report on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region, highlighting the security, humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in the region, and how the United Nations will respond.

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a combined multinational formation, comprising units, mostly military, from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, with the goal of putting an end to the Boko Haram insurgency. They work closely together with the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). The Force is structured in four national sectors: Sector 1 (Cameroon) headquartered at Mora; Sector 2 (Chad) headquartered at Baga-Sola; Sector 3 (Nigeria) based in Baga; and Sector 4 (Niger), based in the town of Diffa.

Both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) were created by the African Union to achieve collective autonomy, raise the standard of living of its populations and maintain economic stability through harmonious cooperation, and continue to do so in order to better the economies of the Lake Chad region countries and the countries surrounding them.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aims to stabilize communities through the simultaneous implementation of an integrated range of short to longer term early recovery interventions. This ensures communities are secure; have access to basic services like education, healthcare, and potable water; have both immediate and sustainable economic opportunities; and local governance structures are revived. Through this, sustainable development in the Lake Chad Basin will be ensured.

## Possible Solutions

There are four main ‘types’ of instability laying the foundation for the Lake Chad crisis; political, economic, environmental and demographic. All these different categories are intertwined and interconnected, and therefore the Lake Chad crisis is very complex.

One core problem is that not enough people are aware of the crisis happening in the Lake Chad region. Unlike the Syrian war and the crisis in Yemen, the Lake Chad crisis receives minimal media attention. Creating media awareness could instigate new projects and initiatives to help the populations in the Lake Chad region, and will help to show the world how terrible the situation there is, and how desperately the people there need all the help they can get to better their situation and to make progress into solving, or at least minimizing the crisis.

The political instability within the region is caused mostly by clashes between Boko Haram and government forces or terrorist attacks. One of the primary motives of joining terrorist groups is the economic benefit one receives when joining a terrorist group. Poverty is a big problem within the Lake Chad area, so it is of big importance to improve the local economies. If this can be done, the percentage of people willing to join Boko Haram for economic benefits will be minimized or eliminated. Another big motive to join a terrorist organization such as Boko Haram is religion and one's beliefs. In order to prevent the future generations joining Boko Haram, we need to provide the local youth with most importantly, accessible education on the Islam, and teach them the Islam as a peaceful and loving religion.

The economic instability is reflected by the high levels of poverty within the Lake Chad region. A lot of the people within this area depend on agricultural activities and fishing to make a living. Due to the unpredictable fluctuation of Lake Chad, both floods and droughts are common within the area, affecting the crops and head of cattle, but also making fishing impossible. This worsens the already poor economic position of the populations residing within the Lake Chad area. To provide the youth with accessible education, they can improve their economic position within society, and they will be able to fill in jobs that will not be affected by the fluctuation of Lake Chad, and this will overall improve the regional economy.

The environmental instability is caused by climate change, which has a strong impact on Lake Chad, and therefore also on the lands surrounding it. Lake Chad is shrinking at a fast pace, and as earlier stated, highly fluctuates, causing floods and droughts simultaneously to occur throughout the area. This has a devastating impact on local agriculture, worsening the food insecurity within the area, but also forces people to flee their homes. Sustainable water management is necessary to minimize the lake's fluctuation, and satellites can be used to partially predict the lake's course over the years. This help with evacuating everybody on time, and the timely notification of a flood or drought to the locals, as to ensure that they can take all preparations necessary.

The demographic instability is mostly caused by the displaced people within the Lake Chad region. These people can be displaced by either the violence caused by Boko Haram in some part of the Lake Chad region, by floods causing homes to be inhabitable, or by extreme poverty. Most of the displaced people are being housed in host communities. However, these communities do not have the resources or space to house these large quantities of people responsibly. In order to make sure that everyone is provided with the resources they require, the UN, with the cooperation of NGOs, should provide the people with food and water to battle high malnutrition and food insecurity rates. Vaccinations and medicines are also important, to prevent epidemics in spaces where people live cramped on each other, and sicknesses can spread easily. Lastly, safe and protected camps should be provided to the displaced people, in order to lift this big weight off the host communities.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A:

<https://www.afd.fr/sites/afd/files/2018-08-04-37-14/Crisis%20and%20Development.%20The%20Lake%20Chad%20Region%20and%20Boko%20Haram.pdf>

### APPENDIX B:

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf\\_Food\\_Security\\_Concept\\_Note.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Concept_Note.pdf)

### APPENDIX C:

[https://www.who.int/hac/donorinfo/highlights/erm\\_highlights\\_issue\\_29\\_october2015.pdf](https://www.who.int/hac/donorinfo/highlights/erm_highlights_issue_29_october2015.pdf)  
[UNDP-OCHA-Lake-Chad-%20Resilience\\_spreads-EN.pdf](#)

### APPENDIX D

<https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Pdf/Onderzoeksrapporten/bn-lake-chad-refugees-idps-190816-en.pdf>

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