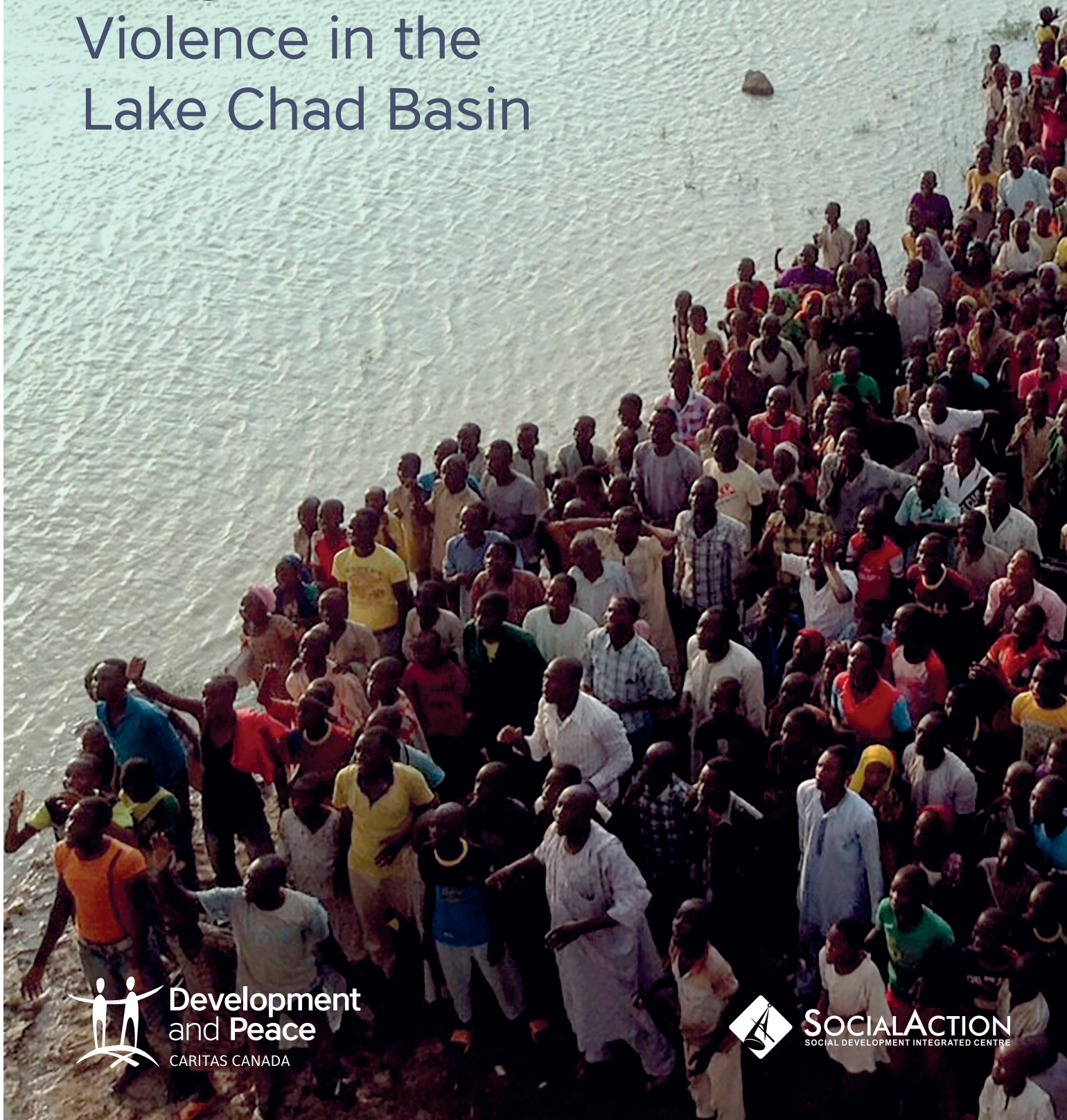


BOILING OVER: Global Warming, Hunger and Violence in the Lake Chad Basin



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All is not well in the Lake Chad Basin. The Boko Haram Islamist insurgency there has triggered a major humanitarian catastrophe, which is particularly affecting Northeast Nigeria. Following three years of research involving displaced communities, local activists, journalists, academics and government officials in Borno and Adamawa States, Nigeria, Social Development Integrated Centre (Social Action) and Development and Peace – Caritas Canada present this report, *Boiling Over: Global Warming, Hunger and Violence in the Lake Chad Basin*. The report examines the underlying conditions that enabled the growth of violent extremism in this region. Even before the advent of Boko Haram, adverse ecological changes linked to climate change and state development projects created the conditions for impoverishment and massive displacement.

Presented here are the voices of the victims of this conflict, in particular traumatized women and other community members grappling with hunger, rape and an uncertain future for their children. The urgency of the issues they raise is underscored by the reality of an ongoing conflict. Beyond the immediate challenges of addressing the humanitarian crisis in the region, this report highlights ecological justice issues for victims of climate change, and national and multilateral development failures. Military actions might be containing the Boko Haram insurgency, but the humanitarian disaster in the area will take years to resolve. Furthermore, the problem of impoverishment cannot be addressed without adequate measures to adapt to climate change.

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Photo credits: Social Action, Abdulkareem Haruna and Development and Peace – Caritas Canada.

List of abbreviations

IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
CBDA	Chad Basin Development Authority
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
Civilian-JTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SCIP	South Chad Irrigation Project
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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Issues in context

Death and destruction in northeast Nigeria

Brutal killings, the abduction and rape of young girls and women, mass displacements and hunger form the reality of life in areas of the Lake Chad Basin affected by the Boko Haram crisis. This crisis was provoked in part by the massacre of defenseless civilians by Nigerian security forces in the northeastern city of Maiduguri in 2009. In response, protests were organized by the Islamist group *Jama'atu Ahli es Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (commonly referred to as Boko Haram), which eventually escalated into an armed rebellion in northeastern Nigeria that has spilled over into Niger, Chad and northwestern Cameroon – areas that border Lake Chad.

Over the decades, the Lake Chad Basin has experienced dramatic ecological changes, resulting in the near complete evaporation of of the lake. This has had an adverse impact on livelihoods and has altered migration patterns. It has forced millions of impoverished youth to move into cities, where government corruption is rampant, setting the stage for discontent to proliferate. Today, the admixture of a blighted ecology with the presence of Boko Haram insurgents, national militaries, armed vigilante groups and international humanitarian organizations in the Lake Chad Basin has created a complicated dynamic with implications for human rights, gender roles, the movement of peoples, food security and the role of government.

“There was already massive displacement in northeastern Nigeria before the advent of Boko Haram.”

Resident of Maiduguri, Borno State

Over 20,000 people have been killed in the Boko Haram war, mostly by Boko Haram, which was listed as the deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2015.¹ The conflict has created one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world today, affecting about seven million people in the four countries of the Lake Chad Basin. With farming halted and livestock looting prevalent, the need for humanitarian assistance is critical.

As of 2019, about two million people are still displaced within the northeastern Nigerian states



of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. Internally displaced people and their host communities are threatened by militant raids, suicide bombings and starvation.

Many of the displaced women and children are subjected to all kinds of deprivations. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that over 400,000 children were in danger of starving to death in 2018 in Borno State.² Although national and international responses to the humanitarian crisis improved in the past years, the crisis has been underfunded and the needs have been great.

Those in various camps decry continuing food insecurity. Many have alleged the diversion of food aid by underpaid and corrupt officials. With inadequate food, medicines and other necessities, many displaced persons die in the camps. Between May and June of 2016 alone, at least 1,200 graves were dug near an IDP camp in Bama town, 75 km away from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Buried in the graves are the remains of people who escaped from Boko Haram violence only to succumb to hunger and disease.³

There are many ghost towns in northeast Nigeria as residents flee Boko Haram violence.

The ecology of conflict: Climate change, dams and displacement

The Lake Chad Basin may present an example of one of the first major international conflicts that can be linked to climate change. Once among the largest lakes in Africa, Lake Chad provided a lifeline for millions of people living within the four countries of the basin. Due to a combination of ecological catastrophes, including droughts and poorly implemented dam and irrigation projects, Lake Chad almost completely disappeared as of

*Displaced persons
grapple with
shortages of food and
other supplies.*



My father, Alhaji Buba Idrisa, was a renowned fish farmer and trader in Baga. I knew back then, even as a child, how life was good around Lake Chad. I accompanied my father to the river on fishing expeditions. The catch was good. We never had to struggle too much to get a large number of big fish. But in the mid 1980s, we began to experience difficulties getting fish. We had to go farther...and my father used to tell me that the waters were drying up because the rains were not falling as in the past. Though I did not quite understand him well, I still have it in my memory that things were not easy... After some time, there were clashes between farmers and fishermen and even the cattle herdsman. I knew back then, that some of my brothers who were in school in Monguno had to come home, and my father said there was no money for them to continue their education. They came home and joined us in our search for fish. Eventually, some of my brothers had to leave home because they could not bear the difficulty and my father encouraged them to go search for work or some form of livelihood elsewhere. Because of the incessant clashes in the area, especially with people from Chad, we later relocated to Maiduguri after the death of my father. I had to resort to petty fish trading. I could not make much money like my father did when we were young. I am now married with 7 children.

Mallam Idi Idrisa, 46. Displaced trader from Baga, Borno State. Place of interview: Maiduguri.

2010, with severe consequences for local livelihoods, migration and conflict dynamics. As one resident of Maiduguri, Borno State commented, "There was already massive displacement in northeastern Nigeria before the advent of Boko Haram."

One impact of the ecological changes in the Sahel this semi-arid region south of the Sahara, is an increase in violent clashes between herders and farming communities, as more herders move southwards in search of greener pastures. In northeastern Nigeria, as the waters of Lake Chad receded during a period of about four to six decades, the situation of widespread impoverishment and loss of opportunities was one of the many factors that provided ready converts to Boko Haram's violent extremism. The loss of Lake Chad meant that Boko Haram insurgents could move freely between the borders of the four countries by passing through areas that used to be covered by the lake.

Deprivation and violence against women, girls and children

Women have been particularly impacted by climate change and the Boko Haram conflict. Eighty per cent of all internally displaced persons in

northeastern Nigeria are women and children.⁴ They are extremely vulnerable to various forms of violence and rights violations. Boko Haram has kidnapped hundreds of girls and subjected them to forced marriage, rape and sexual slavery. Some of the girls have managed to escape, often with children they bore while captive. Some have been infected with infections and diseases including AIDS and face the stigma and added vulnerability of parenting in the context of ongoing displacement. Due to the increased poverty caused by displacement, many children and women must take to the streets to beg or are forced into the sex trade to survive.⁵

Connected with the urgent need to respond to the hunger of the people are the issues of access to water and energy for cooking. Women and girls are particularly under pressure to secure wood as fuel for cooking. Relief agencies provide grains for food, however, finding fuel for cooking remains a challenge. Apart from selling the grains to be able to buy firewood, the search for firewood puts women and young girls at risk of sexual exploitation, including by officers of state security services, according to Amnesty International.⁶



"Now, I have seven children. I don't have the means to send them to school. My husband and my son were killed. There is no farmland here for me to farm."

Recheal Musa, 50, displaced mother from Mungono, Borno State, and currently a resident of an IDP camp in Maiduguri.

Recommendations

1. Ecological justice: Investing in adaptation to climate change

Climate change is an important underlying factor responsible for the ecological and social challenges of the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel region. Solutions to the issues of impoverishment and conflict in the region can only be sustainable if a robust climate change adaptation strategy is central. There should be more commitment by federal, state and local governments, and national and international organizations towards supporting initiatives that allow local farmers and pastoralists to adapt to current weather conditions. Ecological remediation efforts should address water management in the Lake Chad Basin. In this case, new water management schemes should be designed to compensate populations that lost land and livelihoods in past dam and irrigation projects.

If Lake Chad is revived, and livelihoods restored, clashes between pastoralists and farming communities will be reduced. Enhanced local livelihoods through the ecological restoration of the Lake Chad Basin will keep young men economically engaged, reducing the lure of extremist sects and religious cults.



Ecological debt: The international discourse on the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel needs to shift from a view on providing aid towards an understanding of ecological debt. The millions of people who are victims of climate change in the Lake Chad area are not responsible for the global greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change. The fact that they are bearing the burden of climate change makes the immediacy of climate change adaptation a matter of ecological justice.

a. Access to energy: There is a need to identify sustainable options for improving access to energy, including alternatives to fuelwood. With the increased cutting of fuelwood by displaced persons for domestic energy, any efforts at ecological restoration of the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin in particular, will fail if excessive fuelwood consumption is not immediately addressed.

b. Tree planting: The Boko Haram conflict has exacerbated bush clearing. There is an urgent need for tree planting programmes with a focus on drought-resistant indigenous varieties. Community participation in the design, management and securing of tree planting would boost local livelihoods and ensure sustainability.

“Sincerely, we lack food, and there is no money to buy charcoal. The children go out to fetch firewood, which is not always dry enough to catch fire. People are really complaining that the smoke is disturbing them.”

Fatima Sheriff, 30-year-old mother of five, displaced from Borno State.

c. Recharging Lake Chad: This old idea from the 1980s is being reconsidered and should be supported. The most ambitious method involves diverting the Ubangi River from the Central Africa Republic into Lake Chad. Besides the legal and economic hurdles that still need to be cleared before the project can be carried out, the pace at which it is being implemented is slow. In addition, this ambitious trans-border project is expensive and involves the commitment and close collaboration of the riparian states and developing countries. Therefore, Nigeria and the other countries must also consider smaller-scale alternatives

d. Beyond recharging Lake Chad: Options for providing water from abundant groundwater reserves in many areas, including metropolitan Maiduguri, should be examined.

e. Considering the disasters of past water management schemes: New projects should be subjected to thorough environmental and social evaluations with the participation of national stakeholders, including the local populations.

2. Improve recognition and protection of the human rights of women and children

Displaced persons living in vulnerable host communities, informal camps and informal settings, face grave risks and different forms of violations, including exploitation and abuse, family separation, risks of exposure to explosive materials and improvised explosive device attacks, restrictions on freedom of movement and insecurity, exacerbated by insufficient basic services and psycho-social distress. The ongoing conflict and continued displacements particularly affect the most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and chronically ill, persons with physical and mental disabilities, women, children, unaccompanied or separated children, etc. The sexual abuse of and violations against women and children are widespread both in and out of camp settings. Return programs for refugees and IDPs often fall short of international standards on voluntariness, safety and dignity and, as a result, some people revert to dire situations of secondary displacement, with shortages of basic services. As such, there is a need to improve:

a. Community awareness-raising and coexistence initiatives aimed at supporting self-protection and restoring relations between displaced peoples and their host communities;

b. Advocacy initiatives on human rights violations, as well as training and the development of context-specific tools to strengthen coordination with other sectors and to provide for the integration of protection objectives across sectors;

c. Legal aid and services to promote access to justice for survivors of abuse and other human rights violations.

3. Strengthening local civil society

Ensuring the capacity of local civil society to monitor the humanitarian and human rights situation and to identify changing needs in north-east Nigeria is essential for the sustainability of humanitarian assistance programs. Interventions should include activities aimed at improving the capacity of social forces to work towards the positive change that goes beyond immediate humanitarian needs. Fora should be organised where civil society can interact with government officials, and where they can discuss together how to address the challenges of the Sahel region, and the Lake Chad Basin in particular. This will enable state and non-state actors to open up conversations that will lead to a shared understanding of the immediate problems, underlying causes and to develop an agenda for concerted efforts.



Climate change, development and ecological disaster

Once among Africa's largest freshwater lakes, its basin once occupied an equivalent of eight per cent of the entire continent's land surface.⁷ Situated in the Sahel region, which is south of the Sahara Desert, Lake Chad provided a vital source of water for humans and animals - both domestic and wild. Economically, Lake Chad was a significant lifeline for inhabitants of its valley in the riparian nations of Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria. At the time of Nigeria's independence from Great Britain in 1960, its school children were studying the geography of the country where Lake Chad was one of the most prominent features, covering an area of about 26,000 km².⁸ Maps of Nigeria from that time, which contained an imposing Lake Chad, were still in circulation until the end of the 20th century and Nigerians living away from the Lake did not realize that it had receded so extensively that it was no longer within Nigerian territory. As of 2016, the waters of the lake only covered an area of about 1,000 km². Over the past decades, the Sahel region has witnessed a series of ravaging droughts, which have contributed to the drying up of the Lake. Between 1966 and 1997, the lake shrunk to less than 1,500 km².⁹ The lake continued to recede to about 500 km² in 2004. What this means is that Lake Chad has shrunk by about 90% of its

size since the 1960s alone. Indeed, in 35 years (between 1963 and 1998), the lake shrunk by about 95 per cent.¹⁰ Satellite imagery obtained in 2007 by UNEP showed some recovery in the decade following. However, this was not enough to reverse previous losses.

Even as the Lake was receding, the population living within the four countries of its basin was growing. An estimated 25.5 million people lived within the basin in 1990¹¹ and by 2015 the population had risen to an estimated 50 million inhabitants¹², over half of whom live in Nigeria. In the four countries, settlements range from hamlets to the main cities of N'Djamena (Chad), Maiduguri (Nigeria), and Maroua (Cameroon). With the increasing human population struggling to survive on the resources of the Lake Chad Basin, the area is witnessing conflicts amongst the riparian countries as well as among communities over access to water. Disputes between fisherfolk, farmers and herdsman are on the rise.

Climate change

The alarming rate of the loss of Lake Chad since the 1960s has been attributed to a combination of climate change and poorly planned and executed dam and irrigation projects. Global warming has increased the incidences of drought and

Territory of Nigeria at independence (1960) showing a prominent Lake Chad.



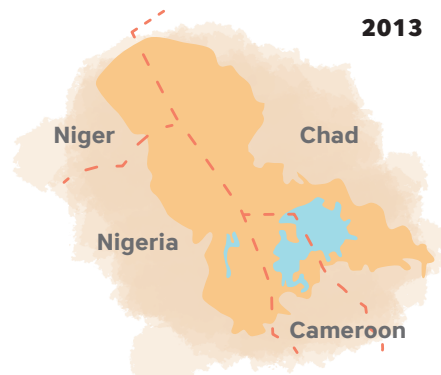
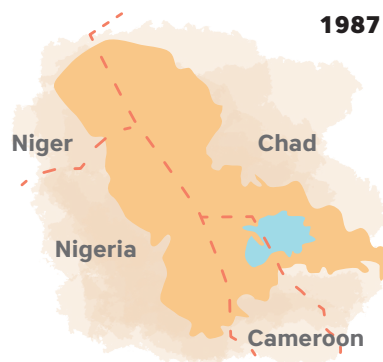
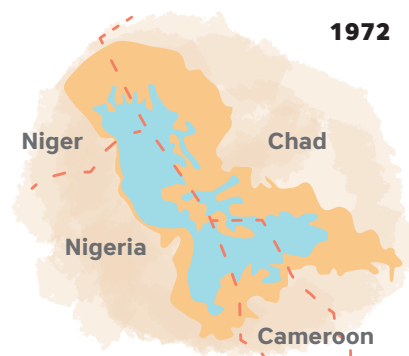
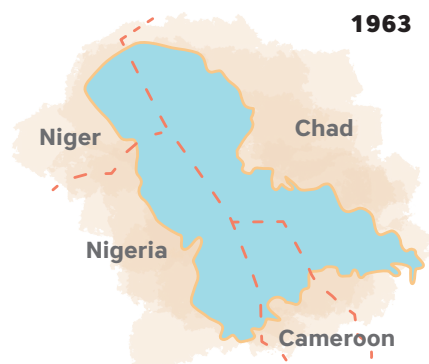
desertification in the African Sahel, where Lake Chad is located. Two significant droughts experienced in the 1970s and 1980s had a particularly adverse impact on Lake Chad. Recent research has linked these droughts directly to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the northern hemisphere. A 2013 study explained that aerosols from coal-burning factories in the United States and Europe during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s contributed to cooling the entire Northern Hemisphere. This resulted in the shifting of tropical rain bands southward, beyond the Sahel region.¹³ Thus, pollution created by the industrialized countries of Europe and North America had profoundly devastating consequences for the millions of people of the African Sahel. The Lake Chad Basin was hit particularly hard. According to a 1998 report for UNEP and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s caused profound changes including the shrinkage of Lake Chad due to decreased flows in its major rivers. Other changes included falling groundwater tables, the loss of plant species, a reduction in canopy cover and the loss of wildlife populations. Since the 1970s, the area has experienced increased soil erosion, which has also lost fertility, and a serious alteration of local economic conditions, including falling job opportunities and limited access to environmental resources.¹⁴

Development of poverty: Dam and irrigation projects

Between 1953 and 1979, irrigation only had a modest impact on the Lake Chad ecosystem.¹⁵ However, between 1983 and 1994 irrigation had increased four-fold in the area. As global warming continued to deplete water resources, there was more pressure on governments to implement dam and irrigation projects. Despite the formation of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in 1964 to promote regional cooperation among the countries sharing the water resources of the area, individual countries tended to act unilaterally in building dams and irrigation projects along rivers that feed the Lake. Following a severe drought in 1972, Nigeria started the South Chad Irrigation Project in 1973, which is managed by the Nigerian Chad Basin Development Authority (CDBA). Nigeria has since constructed over twenty dams along the Komadugu-Yobe river systems. Cameroon built the Maga Dam, which diverted substantial volumes of water from the Logone River away from Lake Chad. By impeding

Lake Chad Evolution

● Former shore
● Water



Maps of the Lake Chad Basin showing timeline of water loss.



Abandoned irrigation project.

the natural hydrological regime, which starved Lake Chad of its vital water supply, these projects compounded the ecological crisis of the region.¹⁶

Some of the projects failed. For example, the South Chad Irrigation Project (SCIP) in Nigeria and the 1979 Mamdi Polder Irrigation Project in Chad failed to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, as in the case of Chad, the abandoned project continued to block water channels.

In Nigeria, as growing oil revenues fueled government expenditures, more dams and irrigation projects were built in the 1970s and 1980s. The dams were built without proper environmental assessments. The result was that the projects obstructed natural water channels, reducing both surface and groundwater. Invasive species such as Typha grass proliferated under those conditions.

Although these irrigation projects improved farming activities in those areas in the beginning, gains did not last. Rice, tomatoes, peppers, wheat, onions and other crops were produced in abun-

dance in this region for transport to markets in southern Nigeria. However, production decreased later on. Lands dried up due to the blockade of water by the Tiga and Chalawa dams. Moreover there have been accusations that dam and irrigation projects were accompanied by major land grabs as the wealthy and those connected to political power cornered most of the well-irrigated lands for themselves.

Recharging Lake Chad

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) has been working towards reversing the loss of the Lake through projects supported by international organizations such as the UNDP and the World Bank. The most ambitious idea predates the LCBC and involves diverting the Ubangi River from the Central Africa Republic into Lake Chad. This long-term project is still in the planning stages. A feasibility study by Nigeria is said to attest to the viability of the project.¹⁷ The Nigerian government is hopeful that the Lake Chad recharge project will strengthen the resilience of the ecosystem, the fauna and flora as well as, "the productive systems around the basin areas to enhance food security, reduce poverty and have the youths more gainfully employed to deny bad groups the opportunity of sourcing them for activities that are detrimental to the sub-region."¹⁸ However, the project is expensive, estimated at \$14.5 billion as of 2012. Funding and inadequate cooperation amongst the leaders of the riparian countries in the Lake Chad Basin have also caused significant setbacks in past efforts to resuscitate the Lake.

Invasive Typha grass.



Army of the unemployed: Hunger and the emergence of Boko Haram

The dam and irrigation projects in northern Nigeria resulted in the large-scale displacement of local populations during the 1970s and 1980s. Research has shown that the rich and others connected to political power acquired land ahead of irrigation projects. As a result of the massive land grabbing, irrigated land ended up in the hands of wealthy landlords while the majority of poor farmers and herdsmen were driven out – many of them ending up in the slums of big towns. It was from these landless and marginalized populations that one of the first cases of radical Islamic insurgency in post-independence Nigeria took root in the 1980s. The Maitatsine Uprising of 1980, in which over four thousand members of an Islamic sect were killed, is linked to displacement caused by the building of dams. In the same year, a peasant revolt in Bakolori over a dam project in the community led to the killing of hundreds of peasants.¹⁹

Just like the revolt of the Maitatsine sect, displacement caused by environmental and developmental factors also contributed to the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency. The condition of income inequality served as the background for the emergence of Boko Haram in 2007, which initially preached against the ‘sins’ of the establishment. In 2009, an uprising by the group resulted in the death of police officers and the burning of churches. In response, the police raided areas inhabited by Boko Haram members. Hundreds of people were killed in the police raids. Nigerian police forces extra-judicially executed the group’s founding leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and many of his alleged followers. A year later, Boko Haram re-emerged as a terror group to orchestrate a regional war that has ravaged communities in vast areas of the Lake Chad Basin.

Starting in 2010, Boko Haram launched a violent campaign, attacking government infrastructure, civilian communities and military formations in northeastern Nigeria. Well-armed, the insurgents move into towns and villages, shooting and beheading residents. Young girls and women are abducted to become sex slaves or are used to perpetrate suicide bombings. Young boys are forced to join Boko Haram, while other youths have started creating militias to defend their communities.



Displaced people on the shores of Lake Chad.



“My problem here is how to get work and go to school. After coming back from school, may God help us to get work to do in the future.”

James, displaced from Baga, now living in the Sharimari community.

During the internecine war, Boko Haram took over territories that became part of its ‘Islamic Caliphate.’ At one point, the size of territories controlled by Boko Haram reached 50,000 km², an area larger than Switzerland. Boko Haram’s territory extended from northeast Nigeria into parts of Niger, Chad and Cameroon. In response to the threat of Boko Haram, all affected countries mobilized major military operations against the insurgents with some military support from global powers, including the United States and France.



Regional conflict

The international borders surrounding the Lake Chad Basin, as elsewhere in the Sahel, are very porous. In the first place, these 'artificial borders' were drawn to allow the colonizing European powers of Great Britain, France and Germany to all have access to the vital waters of Lake Chad. Local communities, divided into the states of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon continued to traverse the borders without much difficulty. Boko Haram members often move across the borders after attacks in Nigeria. With the imperative of regional cooperation, the countries affected by Boko Haram established a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in May 2013. Although disagreements abounded between the countries, security forces in all countries contributed to the military campaigns. Chadian soldiers moved into Nigerian territory for a period. In May 2015, Chadian forces helped to liberate the town of Dikwa in Borno State from the control of Boko Haram. Chadian, Nigerian and Cameroonian soldiers sometimes prevented fleeing Boko Haram fighters from sneaking into their territories. All three countries are hosting thousands of refugees from Nigeria who have fled their communities after Boko Haram attacks.

In 2015, the MNJTF made significant advances, reclaiming seized territories and reducing the

ranks of Boko Haram forces. As of October 2016, the insurgents no longer controlled any of the local government areas of Borno State. The push against the insurgents has come at a high cost for Nigerian troops, the MNJTF and operatives of the Civilian-JTF. Although the Nigerian military has not always been forthcoming in providing the number of casualties on their side, hundreds of soldiers and local vigilantes who work with them have been killed in fighting.

In October 2016, the Nigerian military started to celebrate its victory over Boko Haram even as fighting continued.²⁰ Brazen attacks by Boko Haram continued and intensified towards the end of 2018. In November 2018, Boko Haram attacked a Nigerian army battalion in the village of Metele in Borno State and killed over 100 Nigerian soldiers.²¹ Frustrated by the resilience of the insurgents, soldiers of all four countries affected by the conflict are implicated in extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses.²²

Mustapha Ajimi Damboa, 22, detained member of Boko Haram, Maiduguri.

I used to live in Maiduguri with my parents. I suspected that my brother had something to do with Boko Haram, and one day I stumbled upon a rifle (AK-47) he hid somewhere in our house. When I confronted him, he warned me that as a very senior member of Boko Haram, he would take my life if anyone found out about the gun, and that my life was on the line unless I joined him in Boko Haram and worked for the cause of Allah.

Out of fear for my life, I went with him to a bush camp in Sambisa, where he introduced me to other members who taught me how to assemble guns and how to shoot. From then on, all we have done is attack villages, police, soldiers, shoot or slaughter people and rob them of their cars, money and food.

All of us, about 150 in our unit, are armed. The younger members, like us, are only allowed to carry AK-47s, while senior members carry bigger rifles. We have a lot of arms and ammunition, but we do not know where they come from. Our leaders usually supply us from time to time.

The original targets of our attacks were security operatives and politicians. But since the formation of Civilian-JTF, who reveal our identities and even arrest us, we've decided to kill anyone who is from Maiduguri, because we believe that every person in Maiduguri and some other towns of Borno State are members of Civilian-JTF.

I once escaped to Lagos when my brother who inducted me was killed. But they trailed me to Lagos and arrested me and took me back to the camp here in Borno. Many others who escaped to other places were brought back and slaughtered. When they were about to slaughter me I pleaded and swore never to run again, and luckily, I was spared. And ever since, I have never attempted to run away again. But everyday is like hell to me. We all live in total fear and whenever we are forced to go and kill, we do so out of fear that we will be killed or arrested by soldiers.

We have qualified doctors who are active members... They were not forced to be in the group; they are much older than us and they do all kinds of treatments, including removing bullets from our bodies and fixing broken bones. We get our medical supplies from when we raid towns, by breaking into medical stores or pharmacies and even hospitals.

We have mechanics, we have welders, we have carpenters, we have professional drivers, we have butchers, security experts, gun instructors and so on. We lack nothing to keep us going in the camp. But there is no comfort. Sometimes, when we move away from our main camp, we starve, we get famished and get thirsty for water. We drink from dirty pools, and normally we don't bathe for weeks.

Gambo Mohammed, 27, arrested Boko Haram member from Baga, Borno State.

I, and over 40 other young men, were forced to join Boko Haram in Baga town, when Boko Haram gunmen came to round us up in the mosque.

When we were taken to a bush camp near Konduga, we were given some water that was used to wash off some Arabic inscriptions from a wooden tablet, and we were also given a fresh date to eat that was rubbed with some substance. After eating mine, I felt some internal heat, and then I began to sweat profusely. That was all that I could remember and I became a full member of the sect doing everything other members were doing, including killing people.

I have killed only six people... and I swear it was not more than that figure. In fact, I was even forced to do it when we went to Konduga and we wanted to forcefully take some people's livestock who said they wouldn't allow us to take them, even if it was for the purpose of doing "God's job." So one of our leaders asked me to step out with my gun and ordered me to kill the people and he warned me that if I refused to do as commanded, they would shoot me. So I had to shoot them all. ²³

Alleged Boko Haram members captured by Nigerian troops.



Violence against women and girls

Known to be very industrious, women in the Lake Chad Basin were confronting climatic changes for decades before the advent of the Boko Haram insurgency. Desertification is being exacerbated by deforestation, as increasing human population is resulting in more demand for fuelwood. Deforestation, in turn, limits the coping mechanisms of women and families who have to devote more time to gathering fuelwood.

With the Boko Haram crisis, women's social conditions have deteriorated, and their personal and family security is under increasing threat. They are forced to watch their male children being slaughtered and are powerless to stop their daughters from being taken away by unknown Boko Haram gunmen.



“Boko Haram killed my two sons and took away two of my daughters. My two boys were slaughtered in my presence”

Falmata Hassan, 50, from Chari, Borno State.

Thousands of women and young girls have been abducted and raped by Boko Haram, including the 219 Chibok Girls taken from the Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State, in 2014. About a hundred of the girls were released between 2016 and 2018 following controversial negotiations and exchanges of money between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram. Again, in February 2018, Boko Haram

abducted over a hundred schoolgirls from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College (GGSTC), in Dapchi, Yobe State. All but one of the Dapchi Girls were released about a month after. The last of the Dapchi Girls, a Christian, is being kept in captivity by Boko Haram for refusing to convert to Islam.

Some of the Chibok Girls were found with babies as they had been forced into marriage by Boko Haram while in captivity.²⁴ Apart from the Chibok Girls, hundreds of other rescued women and young girls now have to live with the trauma of having children whose paternity may never be known, or with a disease that they have to live with for the rest of their lives. Some rescued women are diagnosed with HIV.²⁵ About 50,000 children have been recorded as orphans in Borno State alone after Boko Haram insurgents killed their parents.²⁶

Men of the Nigerian army also abuse victims of the insurgency, particularly women in internally displaced camps across the northeast of Nigeria. In a report released in May 2018, Amnesty International indicated that officials of state security agencies have engaged in raping thousands of women and girls.²⁷ The report shows how the Nigerian military and Civilian-JTF separated women from their husbands and confined them in remote camps where they were raped and/or sexually molested in exchange for food.



Women and girls forcibly displaced by the conflict in northeastern Nigeria in the host community of Mashimari. Displaced women sell coal, make traditional hats, and perform other activities. However, this is not enough; they are unable to support their families since they do not have enough income to feed or clothe themselves. Because of restrictions, they can no longer access their farms. They would like to start small businesses or take up sewing.



Jumia Ibrahim, 58, displaced fish merchant from Baga, Borno State.

My trade in life is fishing. It was fishing that took me and my husband to Baga and even into some parts of Chad over the past 40 years. We would wake up every day to eke out a living through fishing and then growing food crops. Without being ungrateful to God, I will say we have made great fortune from our fishing business mostly on the Lake Chad waters.

But unfortunately, Boko Haram came in to dislodge our peace and caused us serious loss of our property and money. On that fateful Saturday, when Boko Haram gunmen attacked at about 6 a.m., we had our last consignment of fish loaded in a truck ready for transportation to the markets. We later lost everything because everyone had to run for their dear lives when Boko Haram came in large numbers, shooting their way into every household and killing everyone they came across. All our food stored in our silos was left behind.

When we got to a village called Kalwararam, I saw many people killed, and at

the outskirts of the village I saw the fresh corpses of two soldiers; one of the soldiers was stripped naked. I could not stand the sight of such horror, but I had to untie my wrapper and cover up his body to, at least, protect his dignity as a man. I kept on running with only my underskirt and the blouse I had on, until I got to a village called Minnati, where a woman saw me and out of sympathy gave me a wrapper to wear over my underskirt. That was how I got to the camp in Maiduguri, all on foot.

I lost many of my relatives while fleeing from Baga. Immediately after we made it to the outskirts of Baga, Boko Haram gunmen intercepted us and took away one of my daughters who was two months pregnant and her three-year-old son, and 13 other ladies who were either my cousins or my husband's younger ones that were living with us. One of my sons, Habibu, who was about 21 years old, was killed by Boko Haram. When they saw him with me, one of the Boko Haram gunmen told me, "Mama, your son is old enough to join the Civilian-JTF, so he is assumed to be a potential member of the Civilian-JTF." For that reason, they dragged him to the ground in my presence and slit his throat. They wanted to force me to hold his legs while they were cutting off his neck, and I told them I could not do such a thing. I attempted to close my eyes because I could not stand to see how they were killing my own son like an animal, but one of them hit me on the arm with the butt of his gun, and insisted that I must watch them as they killed my son. I watched him cry and calling on me to help him. When I cried out that I could not help him, he kept on calling out, "Mama pray for me, and forgive me if I ever offended you. Pray for me."



“Our main occupation in the Lake Chad Islands is fishing. Some are into farming. But our women too are deeply involved in the fishing business. Every day is a busy day for our women. Women make more money in the fishing business than we the men. ”

Alhaji Abubakar Talake, displaced person from Kukawa, near Lake Chad.



Women and children rescued from Boko Haram.

Rebuilding communities and rehabilitating lives

The government of Nigeria has promised to rebuild the destroyed communities that have been reclaimed by Nigerian forces from Boko Haram. However, officials acknowledge that the large numbers of displaced people are overwhelming efforts by the government and international NGOs. Some displaced people want to return to their communities. Most of the IDPs are of the view that they lack what is required for their comfort and wellbeing in the camps. Hence they would rather return to their towns and villages with the hope of starting a new life. Over one million IDPs returned home as of May 2018.

remain open since the resettlement of persons would be suspended due to persistent security challenges.

The ecological and social crises of the Lake Chad Basin, including the violence in the north-east, can be linked to a crisis of governance in Nigeria. There are administrative and institutional capacity constraints linked to limited political will, corruption and incompetence in understanding the dynamics and challenges.



“If we have farmland to cultivate, it means we have our business, we have everything.”

One of the IDP leaders living in the Sharimari host community, Borno State.

Most of the returnees are in Adamawa.²⁸ However, military advances against Boko Haram have not diminished the security risks posed by the terror group in parts of northeast Nigeria. In Borno State, most parts of the state outside the capital city of Maiduguri remain unsafe for displaced persons to return. Locals, who venture but a few kilometres outside of Maiduguri to tend to their crops, have been killed by Boko Haram gunmen. Even in Maiduguri, incidences of suicide bombings are common.

In December 2016, the governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, announced that all IDP camps in the state would be closed by May 29, 2017, as the relocation of IDPs to their liberated communities by the government would be concluded. However, by April 2017 the governor reversed himself and insisted that all camps

Crisis of governance

Lack of transparency and accountability in government interventions sometimes undermines the implementation of ecological restoration projects and the implementation of ongoing security and humanitarian interventions. So far, there have been reports, and widespread public perception, of mismanagement of funds that were voted for in order to provide humanitarian assistance in northeast Nigeria. The capacity of local civil society needs improvement to enable more vigour in monitoring the delivery of humanitarian programs and human rights violations, including violence against women, within and outside IDP camps.

Conclusion

While drawing attention to the need to stop Boko Haram and addressing one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world, this report has dealt with the underlying conditions that enabled terrorism to germinate. This report calls attention to global warming, which combined with agriculture policy failures, have significantly contributed to the drying up of Lake Chad. The ongoing ecological crisis, which has become worse over the decades, has resulted in the loss of fishing livelihoods, farming and grazing lands.

The outcome is impoverished and vulnerable populations. The loss of livelihoods for such a large number of people created the conditions for ready converts to Boko Haram's violent extremism. The receding shores of Lake Chad have allowed Boko Haram insurgents to move freely between the borders of the four countries of the basin using the grounds that used to be covered by the Lake.

The situation in the Lake Chad region is not hopeless. As experts have noted, the Lake's days of glory could be revived if the environmental and ecological factors that led to the drying up of the Lake's waters are tackled frontally. One of the most viable, yet complex, options is recharging the Lake by using channel waters from the far away Ubangi River in Central Africa to fill up the empty bowl that now forms the Lake. This requires an urgent response to mitigate worsening social conditions, including violent conflicts. Considering the urgent need for adaptation measures, the report points out that the millions of people who are victims of climate change in the Lake Chad area did not contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases that have led to this situation. The fact that they are bearing the burden of climate change makes the immediacy of adaptation a matter of ecological justice.



Town and hospital destroyed by Boko Haram.



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