



LAKE CHAD REGION WATER CRISIS (QUICK OVERVIEW)

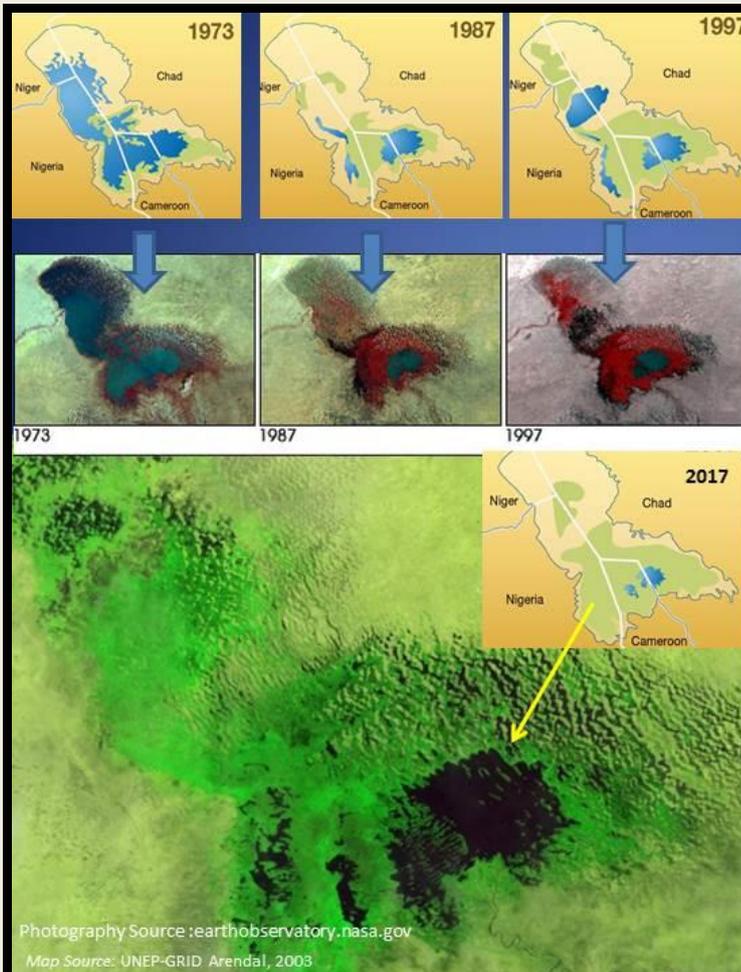
Date: 01 February 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Lake Chad region is highly exposed to many domestic and external shocks and stresses. Lake Chad's dynamic nature is constantly changing due to variations in temperatures and rainfall. Water crisis and related human insecurity is shaped by non-climate interacting factors such as State fragility, displacement and refugee populations, violent conflict and poor regional problem-solving capabilities.

KEY WORDS: water, Lake Chad, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Boko-Haram, refugees, IDPs, Fulani, tribal, violence, crisis

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Lake Chad water surface has shrunk 90% since 1960. Riparian countries: Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria.
- Displaced Population: 17.2 Million; Internally Displaced People (IDPs), Refugees and Third Country Nationals: 2.2 Million
- Insecurity and violence hampers development and humanitarian aid and disrupts economic activities.
- Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) founded in 1964 to manage the lake's waters and foster cooperation so far ineffective.
- Boko Haram is the major obstacle to the technical implementation of restoration projects and one of the main drivers of the crisis.



Between 1963 and the present day, the surface of Lake Chad has shrunk by 90 %



MAIN PROBLEMS

- ✓ Rainfall shortage & Water Diversification
- ✓ Conflicts within riparian countries
- ✓ IDPs and Refugees
- ✓ Violence

MAIN DRIVERS

- ✓ Climate,
- ✓ population dynamics
- ✓ socio-economic-political
- ✓ Terrorist groups (Boko-Haram,...)
- ✓ Inter-tribal conflicts

Photography Source :earthobservatory.nasa.gov
Map Source: UNEP-GRID Arendal, 2003

BACKGROUND.

Lake Chad today is 10 % of the size it was in 1960s, leaving the region's 22 million inhabitants vulnerable to drought and desertification, and costing many individuals their water-based livelihoods¹. Water crisis and related human insecurity is shaped by following non climate interacting factors: state fragility; violent conflicts; displacement and refugee populations and poor regional problem-solving capabilities.

The lake region is highly vulnerable to many domestic and external shocks and stresses. Lake Chad's dynamic nature, as seen in its size, shape and depth, is constantly changing in response to variations in temperatures and rainfall. Hydrological and biophysical changes resulting from natural climatic variability and various human activities threaten the entire Lake Chad basin.

LAKE CHAD REGION CRISIS CHALLENGES AND DRIVERS.

In 1964, after signs had become visible that Lake Chad was waning, the four riparian states of the lake created the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). In the wake of the droughts and water shortages of the 1980s, each riparian country unilaterally took decisions to construct dams and divert water away from the lake without recourse to existing water agreements and consultations with the LCBC.

The crisis is shaped by the following interacting challenges: water crisis and related human insecurity, state fragility, violent conflicts, displacement and refugee populations and poor regional problem-solving capabilities. Climate, population dynamics and socio-economic–political conditions are identified as the main drivers of shaping Lake Chad regional framework.

CLIMATE AND WATER DIVERSION.

From the middle of the 1960s, rainfall started to drop intermittently until the droughts of 1972–75, which coincided with the shrinking of the basin to 10,700 km² from its initial level of 25,000 km² in 1963. Three main drainage systems supply its water: the Chari-Logone River (in the Central African Republic), the Komadugu-Yobe River (in Nigeria) and the Yedsaram / Ngadda River (in Cameroon).

Stream-flow modification and water diversion, associated with the construction of large irrigation and water development projects along the Chari-Logone River and Kamadugu-Yobe River, are also identified as contributing factors in the shrinkage of the basin over the period 1970–2013.

The construction² of Yaguou-Tekele Dyke and Maga Dam beside the Chari-Logone River in Chad and a series of other dams, such as the Alau dam, Tiga dam and the Yeders dam at the Nigerian end of the Kamadugu-Yobe River, have impacted greatly on the lake's waters as water diversion for irrigation and hydropower generation increased greatly between 1981 and 1990.

LAKE CHAD REGION SOCIO-ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK.

The riparian countries are characterized by slow and unstable economic systems. A series of civil wars coupled with increasing military expenditures have further retarded economic progress, particularly in Chad and Niger. Before the current state, the lake waters supported massive agricultural production: fishing, animal husbandry and growing of food crops. Since the droughts of 1970s and 1980s, agricultural production has continued to decline. Herders in several locations have shifted from rearing grazing animals (cattle and camel) to browsing

² (e.g., agriculture, grazing, and fishing)

² Between 1979 and 1990.

animals (sheep and goat). This practice has led to increased removal of vegetation cover. In addition, there is a declining trend of annual fish catch.

POPULATION DYNAMIC.

There are over 70 ethnic groups around the lake exploiting the natural resources through a range of diverse activities. The dominant groups are the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri groups along the western shores of the lake (Nigeria), the Mousgoun in Yaere (Cameroon) and the Sara and Kotoko in the Chari Delta (Chad). This population is predominantly rural, thriving on climate-sensitive agriculture-related activities.

High population density causes over exploitation of natural resources, violence, tribal conflict and mass migration. Rapid population growth under changing environmental conditions makes resource users insecure and vulnerable to violence. The human population dynamics around Lake Chad are driven by a southward migration trend following the collapse of the lake's northern pool in the 1970s and 1980s. The population of the region is well over 30 million, growing at the rate of 2.5 to 3.0 per cent annually.

Climate and economic migration reached peak levels during the great droughts of the 1970s. In search of grazing land, many Chadian shepherding crossed the lake's northern basin to reach the Nigeria-Niger borderlands. In this same period, some Buduma fishermen, moving from Chad, settled for several months of the year in Baga Kawa on the Nigerian shore to fish and sell their catches, adapting to fluctuations in water levels.

LAKE CHAD REGION AND VIOLENCE.

Water crises arose in the region during the droughts of 1980s and 1990s. This period witnessed several militarized conflicts over competing river claims, especially as resource users migrated in response to the shrinking lake. This is illustrated by the almost 60,000 Nigerians who followed the receding lake waters, fishing, cultivating crops and rearing animals within Cameroon's border of the lake basin between 1980 and 1994.

Cameroon and Nigeria clashed over access to the water resources around the south-end border of the lake basin. In 1983, Chad engaged in an interstate violent conflict with Nigeria over the status of the islands in the lake to which both countries have borders. In late 1980s, Nigeria and Niger Republic clashed over water diversion and access to the Komadugu-Yobe River flow within the lake basin.

The Lake Chad region is an example of a region in which violent extremist activity has increased consequently from resource shortage and underlying state fragility. The extremist activity spurred a cross-border security and humanitarian crisis that existing regional cooperation mechanisms were unprepared to address. In addition to terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram, tribal clashes contribute to undermine the security environment. One particular instance is the recurrent clashes between the Shuwa Arabs from the east (of Lake Chad) and the Fulani shepherds from the southwest over the limited fishing and animal farming opportunities at the southern pool of the basin.

Boko Haram has exploited the physical and human geography, the history and the economic dynamism of this distinctive lake environment, finding – like others before – a haven from the pressure exerted by the region's national armies and a financial windfall. Boko Haram has also been able to draw on support, although often intermittent, among local communities that are sometimes competing with each other and have a history of resisting external attempts to impose a political authority.

Drought around Lake Chad is reinforcing terrorist group Boko Haram's stronghold on the region. As farming and livestock farming suffer, the legitimacy of state governments has eroded and the region has become a ripe recruiting ground for radical groups and the illicit trade of drugs, arms and people that sustain it.

For many years, Boko Haram's activity was mainly concentrated in Nigeria's Borno state, its historic stronghold. But since early 2014, the threat has become regional, and attacks on civilians and military positions have multiplied in northern Cameroon since March 2014, in southern Niger and western Chad's islands. Boko Haram's activity has severely damaged the shore of the lake despite the renewed state of emergency that was declared November 2015, still effective, but not formally extended since October 2016.

RESTORATION PROJETS AND FINAL REMARKS.

Increasing consciousness of the imperative need to protect and restore Lake Chad have led the co-riparian states and the LCBC to engage in a number of joint water management initiatives with the support of a number of international organizations. These include a major project to transfer the waters of the Congo basin to Lake Chad in order to replenish the lake and a sustainable development program for Lake Chad, which was launched in 2009. This ambitious program aims to divert water flow from the Oubangui, the major tributary of the Congo River, into the Chari river system that feeds the Lake Chad.

A number of factors are still hindering the implementation of restoration projects such as the lack of personnel and experts at the national and regional level, international agencies and regional partner's coordination. But the major obstacle to the technical implementation of projects is the Increasing threat of Boko Haram in the region that makes almost impossible to send experts and workers on the ground. International organizations and stakeholders involved³ in projects in the Lake Chad region will continue to play an important role in fostering sustainable water management and promoting cooperation between co-riparian states.

The NSDS HUB has been established at Allied Joint Force Command Naples in order to improve NATO's awareness and understanding of the opportunities and challenges from the South, while contributing to the overall coordination of NATO's activities and efforts. The NSDS HUB products are developed with open-source information from governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, academic institutions, media sources and military organisations. By design, the NSDS HUB products or links to open sourced and independently produced articles do not necessarily represent the opinions, views or official positions of any other organization.

REFERENCES

Anon, (2018). [online] Available at: <http://ttps://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/lake-chad-basin-crisis-overview-19-november-2017> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

CAJ News Africa. (2018). Fights over water worsening Lake Chad conflict. [online] Available at: <http://cajnewsafrica.com/2017/09/20/fights-over-water-worsening-lake-chad-conflict/> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

Crisis Group. (2018). Fighting Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond Military Measures. [online] Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/246-fighting-boko-haram-chad-beyond-military-measures> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

Darby, M. (2018). Boko Haram terrorists thriving on climate crisis: report. [online] Climate Home News. Available at: <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2017/04/20/boko-haram-terrorists-thriving-climate-crisis-report/> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

ECC Library. (2018). Lake Chad - Interstate Conflicts and Cooperation | ECC Factbook. [online] Available at: <https://library.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/lake-chad-africa-inter-state-conflicts-and-cooperation> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

U. Stringer, L.Dougill, A. and Bila, M. (2015). Conflicts about water in Lake Chad: Are environmental, vulnerability and security issues linked? *Progress in Development Studies*, 15(4), pp.308-325.

³ FAO, World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, etc.

Relief Web. (2018). Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview (as of 19 November 2017). [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/lake-chad-basin-crisis-overview-19-november-2017> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].

Unocha.org. (2018). Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview | OCHA. [online] Available at: <http://www.unocha.org/rowca/lake-chad-crisis> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2018].