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# Climate Change, Peace and Security in the Lake Chad Basin

Findings from the “Lake Chad Climate-Fragility Risk Assessment Project”

The *Lake Chad Climate-Fragility Risk Assessment Project* is a concerted effort to address the critical gap in knowledge and action on climate and fragility risks in the region.

There is a growing awareness that climate-related security risks are shaping the security context around Lake Chad. In March 2017, March 2018 and January 2018 the UN Security Council recognised that climate-related security risks are shaping the peace and security landscape in the Lake Chad region, requiring adequate climate risk assessment and management strategies.

However, despite this recognition, to date there has been no analysis to assist in achieving these ends.

The *Lake Chad Climate-Fragility Risk Assessment Project* aims to comprehensively assess the key climate related security risks facing the Lake Chad region based on the strongest currently available climate change and conflict data. The aim of this assessment is to identify entry points to strengthen climate risk management in the region.



## EMERGING FINDINGS

**Multiple stressors converge around Lake Chad:** unemployment, limited government presence, poverty and conflict interact with population growth and climate change, with heightened competition for resources exacerbating tensions between pastoralists, farmers and fishers. This impacts upon those whose livelihoods depend on Lake Chad and is threatening peace and security, compounding poverty and unemployment, as well as fuelling intra-regional migration.

**Compounding these factors is the environmental situation.** The size of the lake is highly variable, demonstrating multi-decadal patterns of flux climate change.

Most recently, after a period of contraction, the Lake has started to **slowly expand** again, but the main challenge facing people dependent on the lake is the increased fluctuation and uncertainty. Now more than ever before in its recorded history, the timing and duration of the rains vary erratically. The future impacts of climate change upon the lake are still poorly understood. As the number of people depending on the Lake for their livelihoods continues to increase, it is clear that any further disruption to this fragile ecosystem will have profound impact on peace and security outcomes in the region.

**The unpredictability of rainfall in combination with conflict and insecurity dynamics, contribute to a number of complex risks to security and stability. Our work so far has identified 4 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.



## EMERGING CONCLUSIONS

It is clear then that climate change is exacerbating humanitarian and socio-economic insecurities. To address these impacts, it will be crucial that further information and regular reporting on climate-related security risks are made available to inform the decisions undertaken by all actors working in the region. The Lake Chad region shows us that climate change has multifaceted implications, not least on the peace and security context.

## TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES SO FAR

- 1. It is not a technical problem, so should not be met with a technical solution:**

From this mission, it was evident that the extreme challenges faced by communities living around the Lake are not simply about the water, they are also about provision of basic services, safety and security. It is not a technical problem, but also a socio-political one. Responses which opt for technical fixes to address the (*allegedly declining*\*) water table will not be able to address the root of the problem. Such an approach should be cautioned against. \* *our independent research shows that the lake is actually in a period of expansion.*
- 2. Integrate climate change into stabilisation plans:**

A lot of resourcing for the region is going towards promoting stabilisation against the violence and instability caused by Boko Haram. These stabilisation plans, which include initiatives such as reintegrating ex-combatants and providing them alternative livelihoods, at present, do not take account of the variation in water availability due to climate change. They need to. If, for example, an ex-combatant is given support (assets, training) to reinstate a livelihood in fishing but fishing becomes unviable in the next five years due to fluctuating water levels in the lake, or in farming, but the rains do not come on time for the next three years, then the ex-combatant's raised expectations will be unmet, grievances fuelled, and ultimately, the stabilisation efforts could do more harm than good. Conflict theory tells us that the one thing more risky than unemployed young men, is unemployed young men who have had their expectations raised and unmet. Stabilisation plans, including Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration processes need to take account of and be resilient to the variability which climate change presents to the resources and livelihoods around the Lake.
- 3. The need for joint-risk analysis:**

Despite these linked risks and the need for risk informed solutions, our research shows that there is presently no joint assessment of how climate change and security risks interact in the region. Currently local governments and organisations including the United Nations, African Union and Lake Chad Basin Commission do not receive regular analysis on climate-related security risks. The result is that the issue falls between the cracks and is absent in planning and operational discussions. This is diminishing the chances of stabilisation and sustained peace. For example, efforts to stabilise the conflict and to address hydrological risks are ongoing in parallel but the interrelationship is currently not addressed. An institutional mechanism, point-of-contact, or a hub would ensure that the issue of climate change and security has a home, that someone has a mandate and responsibility to coordinate information and integrate this into relevant activity. Were there such a mechanism in place, the risk analysis would have a greater chance of being operationalised on the ground.

# THE LAKE CHAD CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISK ASSESSMENT



The assessment is specifically intended to deepen understanding of the acute social and development challenges of the Lake, and their complex interaction with climate change, and to cross-fertilize ideas for a comprehensive and integrated response. It builds upon the G7-commissioned report *A New Climate For Peace* and applies this methodology to the Lake Chad context.

## PROJECT AIMS

The process-oriented, locally grounded, integrated risk assessment of the Lake Chad region, aims to provide:

- An identification of linked climate-fragility risks and resilience dimensions
- Substantive policy recommendations for foreign policy makers on entry points for intervention in the region, and effective modes of engagement.

## PROJECT COMPONENTS

- A comprehensive analysis of the interconnected and compound climate-fragility risks based on primary data and a strong participatory process.
- A climate-fragility check on policies, strategies, initiatives and programs of the G7 as well as national governments from the region and other important actors such as the EU and the World Bank.
- Targeted policy recommendations to ministries of foreign affairs and donors and practical recommendations for implementing agencies on addressing climate and security risks in the Lake Chad region.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

The assessment is led by **adelphi** with a consortium of local research partners and a leading climate research institute, with support from UNDP:

- **Centre Européen de Recherche et d'Enseignement des Géosciences de l'Environnement (CEREGE)** (France) – to provide climate expertise on Lake Chad, including a base line of climate and environmental context.
- **Grassroots Researchers Association (GRA)** - a Maiduguri-based non-profit organisation conducting empirical research and conflict analysis in northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region.
- **Centre de Recherches en Anthropologie et Sciences Humaines (CRASH)** in N'Djaména provides research on the conflict context in the Lake Chad region.

## CONTACT

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