
Forum: Security Council

Issue: Addressing the Lake Chad Basin Crisis

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Introduction

The Lake Chad basin crisis is one of the world's most intense crises but is also one of the world's less known crises. The Lake Chad basin crisis can also be recognized as the Boko Haram crisis due to the great involvement of the terrorist organization in the development of the issue or as the Forgotten Crisis due to the lack of publication of the events.

The Lake Chad basin crisis started as an environmental crisis in the 1960's, but evolved into a social, economic, and political crisis by the 21st century. The major countries involved are the following: Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. These four countries all have regions that are located in the Lake Chad basin. These countries chose to discriminate the people who live in that area, while they keep providing more aid to their more developed cities. The people living there are highly affected by the lake's detrimental drought, and the continuous and unmerciful attacks by Boko Haram.

Due to the continuous complication of the issue, and the rising number of civilians who lose their source of income and basic humanitarian needs (food, shelter, sanitation, education), the western world is not as involved in providing aid. Along with the environmental crisis due to the lake and the political crisis due to Boko Haram's involvement in the region, the humanitarian crisis is also escalating with the lack of education, sanitation, shelter, food, job, and water, while births keep increasing.

Additionally, families are teared apart through all this conflict. Fathers are forced to abandon their wives and children to participate in the military in the fight against Boko Haram, which forces mother to look for work in order to help their children. Oftentimes, due to disease or terrorist attacks children are forced to lose their parents and entire villages are destroyed making large populations become refugees and search for shelters in other nearby countries.

This issue is one that requires utmost attention from all the delegates in the committee as it is one of the least discussed issues in need for immediate and effective solutions. The delegates should be able to provide the house with fruitful resolutions that can be applied in real life, while indulging themselves in interesting debates on the humanitarian, political, social and economic issue of the Lake Chad basin area.

Definition of Key Terms

Basin

The land that surrounds a body of water, and the area where streams of the water body flow into.

Freshwater Lake

A lake that is filled with drinkable water, that can be directly used by humans for consumption, or for agricultural purposes.

Boko Haram

The literal translation of “western/non-Islamic education is a sin”, Boko Haram is an extremist group in the northern region of Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin inspired by Sunni Islam. They have committed several crimes against human rights including murder.

Refugees

Refugees are people that have been forced to leave their country in order to avoid conflict or natural disasters.

Terrorists

Terrorist are usually groups of people who use violence against innocent people to prove a political, or/and political point.

Background Information

The Lake Chad Basin Crisis, also known as the Forgotten Crisis or the Boko Haram Crisis, is one of the most intense ongoing crises that affect a large amount of the world's poorest people. What started as an environmental crisis has now become a social, political, and humanitarian crisis that is affecting the over seventeen million people that live in that area. *(Figure 1 (see right): outline of the Lake Chad Basin region on map of western Africa).*



Economic and social situation at the Lake Chad basin region

The countries that are located in the Lake Chad basin region have always faced severe economic complications which in turn has brought social discrimination into the picture. Political unrest starting from the Nigerian civil war in the 1960s-70s and rebellions in Chad during the 1970s and lasting until the 1980s when the situation quieted down was the beginning of an economic defeat for the region. After these wars and unrest in Nigeria, Chad (and the surrounded affected regions: Niger and Cameroon) the respective governments had to spend huge amounts of money to make up for the repercussions of the conflicts. At the time their economies were based on the extraction of oil and water from the lake, but the governments found themselves coming in short after the oil slump in 1984. After that the governments spent most of the money they had left in construction and developing public services for the time but did not keep anything for future years.

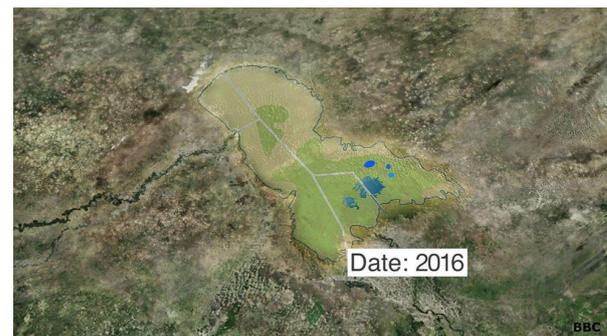
With the drought of the Lake Chad following close all the governments of the four aforementioned countries fell to an economic crisis which has yet to end. Due to this continuous economic crisis the governments of the region have chosen to support their more developed cities, leaving smaller cities and villages in the Lake Chad basin region unattended. This has caused the citizens of the more developed cities to think lowly of the people living in the Lake Chad basin

region as they seem to be poorer and less educated. With the lack of government support the public opinions keep intensifying and creating greater gaps between the people of the capitals and those living in the basin area.

The location of Lake Chad

Lake Chad is located in West Africa and was mainly used to provide fresh water in the Lake Chad basin region. It is surrounded by Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger, all countries who highly depend on the lake for their everyday lives and businesses. Although the lake used to be one of Africa's largest lakes, over the years it has become significantly smaller and drier, which has led to economic and social unrest in the region. The lake has continuously been used for provision of water, fishing, transportation, and even extraction of minerals. All these aspects have provided the countries around it with a great economic benefit and a rare gift in Africa.

In the following pictures the loss of volume of the lake in recent years is shown (as photographed by BBC). As seen in the figures below, the remnants of Lake Chad in 2016 are significantly lesser compared to what the lake used to be during the 1960s. This environmental disaster became the basis for the Lake Chad Basin crisis. *(Figure 2 & 3: Before and After of Lake Chad in the 1960s and 2016)*



The effects of the crisis on the people living in the Lake Chad Basin Region

Although a preexisting discrimination between the southern/western regions of Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Chad and the Lake Chad area is one cause of the lack of nutrition, funds, and shelter in the Lake Chad basin, there are several other factors that have caused the following issues. The Lake Chad area can be described by high birth rates, poverty and low formal education levels.

These areas have acquired some of the lowest levels of education in the world according to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Moreover, according to UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund) the majority of the children suffering from malnutrition in these four countries are from the Lake Chad basin area.

Another factor of the crisis is the continuous climate change in the world. With the lack of rain in the Lake Chad basin region the lake has dried up almost completely. With the loss of Lake Chad in recent years livestock has been very hard to maintain, and agricultural productivity keeps on declining, bringing in less and less profit for the people. Some of the people who live in the area chose to migrate to other regions of Africa where they have a better chance to finding jobs, shelter and food. On the other hand, a big percentage of the people habituating the Lake Chad basin area are unable to migrate due to the detrimental lack of education or skills to work in another sector.

In addition to the above, a lot of infrastructure (more than 80% in the Lake Chad basin area) has been destroyed ever since the crisis began, due to several Boko Haram attacks or to the lack of maintenance by the government. Alongside to that several schools, hospitals and clinics, wells, and roads have also been destroyed. Finally, Boko Haram has played the lead in this issue, as it has been continuously taking advantage of the region and its people, by gaining most profit for produces and mistreating the people by disregarding human rights.

Boko Haram and its involvement in the area

Boko Haram began as an Islamic “reform group” in Yobe state, northeast Nigeria, in 2002. Their initial goal was to show the Nigerian people that Islam was the “remedy” for the ill-governance, famine and poverty in the region. In 2009, after the murder of the first leader of Boko Haram, Mohamed Yusuf, the situation became more intense between the Nigerian government and the supporters of Boko Haram. The new leaders began selecting and killing targets they believed were involved in the killing of Mohamed Yusuf. These including the Nigerian army and police forces, high ranked Nigerian officials, other countries related to Nigeria (such as the other three countries in the Lake Chad basin), and even the United Nations.

The group has since then forcibly used children and women in the region as suicide bombers and has kidnapped and abducted several children. One of the most recognized abduction cases was the one of Chibok girls from a school in the Borno state in 2014. In 2015, Boko Haram started attempting to acquire new territories such as Chad and Cameroon. Later that year Boko Haram changed its name to “Islamic State West African Power” (ISWAP). Relating to its neighbors (Niger, Chad, and Cameroon), Boko Haram has used these areas to illegally trade weapons and supplies, as well as forcibly recruiting men and fighters, which has left many families in the area in the hands of one parent or non.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Chad

The Republic of Chad is a country located in north central Africa. Due to its landlocked nature its only access to water was Lake Chad, and a large percentage of its land is located in the Lake Chad basin. Chad is one of the most affected countries of the Lake Chad Basin Crisis. Chad has seen a great increase in the attacks by Boko Haram since 2015, and has joined forces with Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram. One of the latest attacks by Boko Haram was in July 2018, when 18 people were killed and about 3,000 people were forced to evacuate their villages without time to take anything with them.

Cameroon

Cameroon is an African country located on the Gulf of Guinea. It is the safest among the other Lake Chad basin countries (Nigeria, Niger and Chad), although it is still severely scared by continuous Boko Haram attacks. The people who live closer to and in the Lake Chad Basin region of Cameroon are not treated equally compared to those living in the largest cities. They are frequently discriminated and given less social and economic help by their government. Most recently, in February of 2019 one hundred and seventy (170) kidnapped students were freed after negotiations. Several allegations state that the kidnapping was staged by the government to worsen

the image of rebels and Boko Haram, while others believe it was one of the many Boko Haram actions.

Nigeria

Nigeria is located on the Gulf of Guinea. It is the most developed amongst the other Lake Chad Basin countries (Niger, Chad, Cameroon). Nigeria is the first base of Boko Haram in the African region. Similar to Cameroon, the people living in the Lake Chad basin are given less resources and aid compared to those who live in the big cities. Due to the extremities of Boko Haram actions many Nigerians choose to abandon their home and become refugees in other surrounding countries, mostly Cameroon.

Niger

Niger is a country in West Africa that shared borders with Nigeria and Chad. It is the smallest of the Lake Chad basin countries, though it has the highest birth rate. Niger is characterized as the country with the most Boko Haram attacks and is the most affected by them in the region. Similar to the other three Lake Chad basin countries, the people who live in the Lake Chad basin area are discriminated compared to the ones living in the larger cities of the country.

Boko Haram

The literal translation of “western/non-Islamic education is a sin”, Boko Haram is an extremist group in the northern region of Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin inspired by Sunni Islam. They have committed several crimes against human rights including murder. One of the most well known and most publicized cases of Boko Haram action is the abduction of 276 school girls known as the Chibok Girls. The abduction happened on the 14th of April 2014, and the girls were abducted from a government school in Borno State of Nigeria. Although it has been four years since the abduction, 112 of the girls are still missing. Boko Haram started in Nigeria and some of its first members included children of respected and high ranked government officials in Nigeria, which brought in reliable funding for the terrorist organization. With this support Boko Haram was able to reach out to more people from other countries and gain more funding from those who were willing to lend them money. Because of the close relationship of Nigeria with Chad, Niger and Cameroon it was possible for Boko Haram to recruit many “fighters” from those countries but also easily smuggle

weapons and supplies to their bases. In later years Boko Haram has attempted gaining funds through ransoms after several kidnappings, usually children or tourists.

Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger have received financial help from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France and other international agents such as the European Union and the African Union in order to strengthen their power to more effectively fight against Boko Haram but the situation has not seen any improvement. By 2016 the army forces of the four countries involved managed to geographically limit Boko Haram to specific regions in each country but their attacks contrastingly increased. The United Nations Security Council came to a resolution for the Lake Chad Basin Issue in 2017, though the specific issue of Boko Haram was not discussed in as much detail as needed. Although several other resolutions on international terrorism have been released by the United Nations most of them are focused on groups such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and Taliban (Terrorist group in Afghanistan), terrorist groups that occupy and attacks a larger geographic area than Boko Haram, therefore disregarding the big impact and severe implications of Boko Haram in the region.

Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) is an international organization founded on the 22nd of May of 1964 aimed on the observation and aid in the regulation of water and natural resource distribution and usage in the Lake Chad Basin region. The members of the LCBC are Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Libya and the Republic of Central Africa (CAR), while Sudan, Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo hold observer status. It has cooperated with the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) several times to create resolutions to the issue and provide aid to the involved countries. The LCBC has managed to acquire funds from states such as the United States and United Kingdom after several discussions which helped raise the army participation to the crisis. Moreover, through the LCBC Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon were able to come to several agreements regarding the financial and military actions taken by each of them to combat Boko Haram, but also better their economies.

Shelter Box

Shelter Box is a charity organization that provides international disaster relief. In the Lake Chad basin specifically, it helps provide refugees and residents with housing tents and tools for the building of houses and everyday necessities. Shelter Box mostly helps those that have been attacked by Boko Haram, or displaced by their attacks. They also provide machines for purifying water, and daily meals for the families that cannot get access to food. They mostly work with volunteers and their main source of income is through donations of the western world. In 2018 they managed to provide emergency aid kits that included blankets, solar lights, and ground sheets to 500 people, and have given new homes to 456 families. They also managed to raise 549,000 British Pounds for the Lake Chad Basin crisis in 2018.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1960's	Lake Chad starts becoming more and more dry
22 May 1964	Lake Chad Basin Commission is founded
1998	Creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)
2002	Boko Haram creates a base in Nigeria
2009	Mohamed Yusuf, Boko Haram's first leader gets killed
14 April 2014	Chibok Girls Abduction by Boko Haram
2015	Boko Haram increases attacks in Chad, Niger and Cameroon
2016	Lake Chad becomes completely dry
July 2018	Latest Boko Haram attack in Chad (15 deaths, 3000 refugees)
February 2019	170 kidnapped students are released in Cameroon

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Security Council Resolution on the Situation in Lake Chad Basin Region, 31 March 2017 (S/RES/2349)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The governments of the affected areas have previously tried to soften the situation in attacked or resource deprived areas, though they were not successful neither they were willing to be. This is caused by the lack of monetary funds for such aid, and the very much evident discrimination towards the poorest people in the Lake Chad basin region. Countries tend to give more of their support to their capital cities and other more populated areas instead of the smaller regions in the Lake Chad basin area. Moreover, the leaders of the countries are afraid to get involved with Boko Haram habited areas, since they do not want to cause further conflict.

One of the most effective attempts to solve this issue was the creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) IN 1998. This task force was created to address security issues of the in-between borders of countries located in the Lake Chad basin region. Although the MNJTF was deactivated for a certain period of time the LCBC reactivated in 2012 after several Boko Haram attacks in the region. When the MNJTF was reactivated in 2012 it also took upon combating terrorism plans and came up with several anti-terrorism operations that should be implemented in the region. Finally, in October of 2014, the MNJTF was recognized with the role of eliminating Boko Haram officially by the LCBC.

Possible Solutions

The combating of this issue can be faced with several different types of approaches, but it is of utmost importance to ensure that we firstly tackle the issue at its source. Currently, Boko Haram is the main factor of disturbances in the region and so solutions in this issue should firstly address counter-terrorism techniques and how Boko Haram can be eliminated. Avoiding the creation of new task forces, since the MNJTF already exists, is essential, but creation of actions that the MNJTF can take is recommended. Focus on how the terrorists get their hands-on weapons, and how they fund their groups. Moreover, consider security measures that might help in protecting civilians from terrorist attacks like the several kidnappings that have taken place.

Another aspect of the issue that needs to be tackled is the environmental one, but since there is no way that we can do so directly (like restoring the water of Lake Chad), humanitarian action towards the ones affected by the environmental crisis of our issue is essential. Organizations like Shelterbox and Mercy Corps propose the increase of investments towards humanitarian aid by member states who are able to, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Establishing safe access to food, housing, clear water, and sanitation are essential for the citizens of the Lake Chad basin region so all resolutions should touch that topic.

Additionally, the the political and social aspects of this issue, such as the discrimination of the people living in the Lake Chad basin regions should be addressed. Recommending governments of the regions to sign treating that will grant all of their citizens equal right and treatment on all societal, political, humanitarian, and economic aspects is one of the possible solutions to eliminate discrimination. Moreover, making sure that education is provided to the residents of the Lake Chad basin region, so as to provide them with more options in the workforce later on is important. The economic situation in the region should also be resolved, so it is significant to provide solutions for the diversification of the economy of the involved countries, so they can make use of resource other than water to enrich their income and gross domestic product (GDP). In this way governments of the area will also be able to provide additional humanitarian and social help to their citizens. The bringing up of abandoned of orphaned children is also a very important issue that should be recognize and provided with solutions like an adoption policy or organization in resolutions.

Moreover, clauses addressing the handling of refugees and refugee camps in surrounding states and other countries by the help of NGOs and More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) should be addressed. Finally, raising awareness for this issue in the MEDCs is essential, as it was mentioned earlier that the Lake Chad Basin Crisis is if not the least, one of the least known and recognized crises worldwide.

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Appendix

- I. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/west-and-central-africa/lake-chad-basin-crisis-overview> (Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview)
Interactive statistical map of Lake Chad basin crisis can provide better understanding of the geographical and humanitarian effect of the crisis in the region.
- II. Figure 1: *outline of the Lake Chad Basin region on map of western Africa*
- III. Figure 2: *Before and After of Lake Chad in the 1960s and 2016*
- IV. Figure 3: *Before and After of Lake Chad in the 1960s and 2016*