

SHORING UP STABILITY IN THE LAKE CHAD REGION: ADDRESSING CLIMATE AND FRAGILITY RISKS

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

Adelphi

MODERATOR

Janani Vivekananda

Senior Adviser and Project Lead, Adelphi

OVERVIEW

The Lake Chad region (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) is caught up in deadly and seemingly intractable conflict that has killed thousands of people, displaced over 2.5 million and left over 10.7 million in urgent humanitarian need. Solely military responses are not working. The first step towards addressing the crisis is to understand how and why it came about. This session unpacked the findings of an assessment of the climate and fragility risks affecting the region—the independent Adelphi report *Shoring up Stability: Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region*—in order to identify responses which can address the linked causes and drivers of the crisis. The research finds that Lake Chad is not shrinking. Nonetheless, climate change poses a profound and far-reaching challenge to stability. In this in-depth problem-solving session, experts from the region and development policymakers drew on the newly available evidence to debate the different and connected dimensions of risk and to assess the merits of a number of specific responses.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the findings of the assessment, this session aimed to shine a light on the specific climate change and fragility risks affecting the Lake Chad region and the need for responses in the region to take account of these risks. Failure to do so has been proven to increase these risks further. However, addressing these risks provides an opportunity to ensure responses are sustainable, that future risks can be prevented and that the conflict trap can ultimately be broken.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

An understanding of the interconnectedness of climate and security is needed in order to make sure that the responses implemented are effective and sustainable.

In her opening remarks to Forum 2019, Ulrika Modéer, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy at UNDP, underscored the importance for actors working in conflict contexts to conduct climate-fragility risk analysis. Secondly, she stressed the need for getting the analysis right in order to avoid maladaptation to climate change which worsens the conflict, security responses which worsen climate impacts, and to enable management of joint risks.

Lake Chad is a good indicator of climate change. According to research on this 7-million-year-old lake, its size is highly variable. Satellite data has been used to show how the size of the lake has varied over the past 20 years and the findings show that its size has proven relatively stable over the past two decades. Indeed, the total water storage has actually increased, if one includes groundwater as well as surface water. The lake's size has expanded to currently roughly 14 000 square kilometres.

Any responses to the situation around Lake Chad therefore need to take into account the latest research findings.

During the session the discussants further pointed out the interlinked climate and fragility risks in the Lake Chad region. The discussion focused on the following four risks:

1. The ongoing conflict undermines people's ability to deal with the changes that an increasingly variable climate is bringing.
2. Climate change, conflict and displacement is adding to intercommunal tensions over natural resources such as arable land, grazing pastures and fishing areas.
3. By compounding poverty climate change is adding to the conditions in which armed groups can recruit new fighters
4. Heavy-handed military responses to the violence can themselves undermine communities' resilience and their ability to adapt to climate change. The focus on military measures to respond to the crisis by the region's governments has not addressed the root causes of the crisis.

At the moment, for example an increasing number of attacks in the region is reported as well as that due to the security restrictions in place people are pushed further and further towards armed opposition groups and even moving significant distances to join them.

It is important to share new information and analysis between the actors that work in the region, in order to prevent escalation of the existing conflicts and crises. For example, military interventions to fight armed opposition groups such as Boko Haram partly undermine the population's livelihood as they do not take into account the climate variability in the region. To avoid this, it is important to spread information among the actors and for the government responses to take into account the links between climate and fragility risks.

Coordination between governments, academia, regional actors and civil society is currently still a problem. Two questions must be addressed: 'Who is doing what and where?' and 'Who should coordinate all the actors in the Lake Chad region?' There is a fear that opportunities for synergy between the responses are being missed in the absence of coordination.

To summarize, it is necessary to rethink the responses made in the Lake Chad region and to start to integrate climate change, security planning and humanitarian action perspectives in all responses that are implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that efforts to address the violent conflict and humanitarian crisis and build longer term development take account of climate change and fragility risks.
- Independent science/research is crucial to avoid politicization of findings; Have to engage national governments in the region in the analysis and bring findings down on the ground
- Sharing of information and coordination between partners is still a gap; synergies and leadership in the region are crucial
- The situation around Lake Chad is a transboundary issue, Lake Chad Basin Commission has a strong role in it
- Rethink mindsets of responses, often climate change comes later after stabilisation but people in crises are at the same time affected by climate change; hence a "climate lens" needs to be part of stabilisation/humanitarian actions at any time; To address climate and conflict in an integrated approach is not only relevant for the Lake Chad region but for climate and conflict affected regions in general.
- Stress the importance of the Regional Stabilization Strategy, accepted by Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, since it aims to facilitating a transition from active military engagement to addressing the root causes of the crisis and rationalizing various initiatives to stabilize areas affected by Boko Haram.
- Also stress the need for local government investment in the Lake Chad region as a complement to the Regional Stabilization Strategy.

LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Vivekananda, J. et al., *Shoring up Stability: Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region* (Adelphi: Berlin, May 2019), <<https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/shoring-stability>>.



This session report was produced onsite at the 2019 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development hosted by SIPRI and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The report aims to reflect the session discussion. The views, information or opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of SIPRI, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs or other institutes associated with the session