

High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region

Summary and Recommendations from Civil Society-led Panels

Berlin, Germany, 3-4 September 2018

Introduction

As part of the high-level conference on the Lake Chad region, Plan International Germany and Caritas Germany organised three civil society-led panels over the two days:

- 1) Day 1: Key messages from civil society consultations;
- 2) Day 2: Addressing needs from a humanitarian and development perspective; and
- 3) Day 2: People-centred stabilization and a way forward for the Lake Chad region

The speakers on each panel are listed in [Annex 1](#).

Panel Summaries

1) Key messages from civil society consultations

Held on the morning of the first day and just prior to the official opening of the high-level conference, civil society representatives provided feedback from their in-country consultations. The civil society consultations were organised by OCHA country offices with civil society (national NGOs, civil society organisations, and international NGOs) in the four countries: Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. During the panel, a number of issues and concerns common to the four countries were outlined before turning to more country-specific issues.

1. **Regional approach:** Many of the root causes of the conflict are cross-border and many of the communities have traditionally moved across the borders. As such, there is a need to ensure a regional approach in all programmes.
 - Currently, there are different approaches by countries towards returnees and the reintegration of returnees, including former fighters and those associated with armed groups. A regional strategy is needed to ensure a common approach towards the reintegration of returnees, with national frameworks being adapted accordingly.
 - When working with refugee populations, it is important to look at the impact of the conflict on the population as a whole.
 - Programmes need to be delivered in areas affected by the conflict, but also in areas that have not been affected by the conflict to ensure that tensions do not arise and to prevent the conflict from spreading.
2. **A protection crisis with humanitarian needs:** While there are areas where a developmental approach can be taken, there is still a protection crisis with humanitarian needs that must continue to be met. The focus on the humanitarian-development-peace/stabilization nexus must not distract from the urgency to access populations in humanitarian need. Greater coordination among all concerned actors is required to ensure access to populations.
3. **Putting people at the centre:** It is essential to put people at the centre and to involve communities in responding to humanitarian needs and working towards development in areas where that is possible. Their coping strategies and capacities should inform the programmes of other stakeholders whose responses should build on the agency of people and include affected communities in decision-making.
4. **Responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** The response to SGBV across the region needs to be improved through prevention, as well as through appropriate and adequate support for survivors. There is a need to work particularly with the military on sensitisation and to strengthen prevention, while also working with community leaders to support reintegration and to address the stigma related to SGBV survivors.

5. **Civil documentation:** Prior to the crisis, civil documentation was often lacking. The response to the crisis provides an opportunity to increase the prevalence of civil documents, such as birth certificates, identity documents, marriage certificates, and death certifications, which will help improve access to services and the fulfilment of basic rights during the conflict and beyond.
6. **Basic services and employment:** As a part of addressing the crisis, basic services are needed, including health care, education, and vocational training. Ensuring access to employment, particularly for women and youth, will play an important role in ensuring stability in the region.
7. **Localisation:** Localisation is a phrase that is often used, but needs to be taken more seriously. There is a need to work through existing local organisations, as they will be important stakeholders in implementing the ‘new way of working’ (NWOW). It is also important to work with local actors to build on their existing peace-building models and capacities.

2) Addressing needs from a humanitarian and development perspective

Building upon the messages from Day 1, the panel involving different stakeholders focused on how to address needs from both a humanitarian and development perspective. Panellists were asked to focus on making practical suggestions and recommendations on how to make concrete progress building on the ideas raised on the first day.

1. **More robust engagement** is required by all actors to address the vast range of humanitarian and development needs facing the countries and people in the region.
2. **Governments must put an end to the current impunity by investigating the continuing violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and human rights law** by both Boko Haram and security forces (armies, police force, etc.). The violence and violations, particularly affecting women, girls, and children, must be addressed.
3. **Access** to populations in need remains a challenge that must be tackled through more dialogue between all parties. The closed borders further exacerbate access challenges. Governments must commit to finding ways to ensure access to all populations in need.
4. The humanitarian crisis has increased the **vulnerability of women and girls**. Actions to address these vulnerabilities should be subject to specific programme planning, not added as an afterthought to ongoing programmes.
5. **Protection programmes need more funding**, including programmes focused on education and reintegration. Related to reintegration, there is a need to change the narrative around children being used as ‘human bombs’ (person-born improvised explosive devices, PBIEDS). They are children who are being forced to carry bombs: they are not making a choice.
6. **SGBV:** In addition to preventing and responding to cases of SGBV, there is a need to change attitudes in the region to make SGBV culturally and socially unacceptable. Such a change in attitudes will require involving all parts of society, particularly men and boys.
7. **Coordination** requires continued improvements that involve all actors (i.e. different levels of government, UN, donors, local/national/international NGOs, and civil society organisations). It is important to consider what collective outcomes should be achieved for both humanitarian and development programmes – and to look at how the monitoring and evaluation of programmes can lead to improvements in response.
8. All actors must be held to **account for the delivery of aid** to avoid any diversion of aid. This accountability also requires governments to play their part in ensuring that aid is not diverted.
9. There must be **more investment in local actors**, including finding different ways to engage them. Humanitarian and development programmes must build upon the knowledge of local actors. At the same time, it is important not to build negative narratives about international NGOs, particularly given that, on average, some 95% of their staff are nationals and INGOs are committed to driving forward the localisation agenda.

10. **Complementarity between actors** – as noted in the *Principles of Partnership*¹ – is an important element when carrying out humanitarian and development programmes. Different actors bring different skills and experience to any humanitarian and development response, which can help to provide more effective and efficient programmes.

3) People-centred stabilization and a way forward for the Lake Chad region

Given that the crisis is multi-dimensional, there is a need to have multi-dimensional approaches to stabilization. The third panel provided different suggestions of how to practically put people at the centre of stabilization efforts.

1. **Stabilization occurs at different levels:** individual, family, community, sub-national, state, national, regional, international, etc. These different levels must be recognised when considering ways to approach stabilization.
2. **People-centred approaches:** Various actors will focus on stabilization at different levels. The common thread between these approaches is that they all focus on people, but the approaches are from different angles. Including individuals and communities is key to building trust and to enabling a people-centred approach.
 - **A 'new' triple nexus:** There are three elements that are essential for people-centred stabilization: 1) confidence (in the processes), 2) trust (among all stakeholders), and 3) inclusion. Without these elements, stabilization efforts will be unsuccessful.
3. **Education is key:** Investing in education is an important element for any stabilization efforts.
4. **Engage communities:** If communities are not engaged from the beginning of responses, there is the risk of negative effects. It is essential to engage women and youth to understand what they think is required so as to meet their specific needs. Clearer targeting of host communities, whose resources have been strained over time by sharing them with IDP and refugee populations, in response programmes will strengthen social cohesion.
5. **Religious leaders are key stakeholders** given their position in society, how many people they engage with regularly, and their weekly access to millions. Not working with religious leaders in humanitarian, development, peace, and stabilization efforts would be a missed opportunity.
 - **Governors and different levels of government must ensure the protection of all religious groups.**
 - **A regional religious approach needs to be considered.** The role of religious leaders in helping to mitigate conflict has not been adequately harnessed. There is a need to train religious leaders to counter extremist views, which continue to arise.
6. **Find ways to empower women and youth**, particularly through economic empowerment and access to livelihoods.
 - Consider ways to engage men to **address gender inequality**.
 - Donors should consider more ways to **ensure (financial) support for women's groups**, including possibly earmarking funds.
7. **Military forces must be trained in IHL and be trained to work in a sensitive manner with women and youth**, particularly those who have been victims of violence or SGBV. In particular, military forces must be trained to work with those who have escaped from Boko Haram.
8. **Put in place platforms to enable forgiveness and reconciliation.** Assistance to returnees must be done in a way that fosters reconciliation and does not create additional tensions.
 - **Access to information and knowledge are essential.** Platforms are needed to sensitise populations to the complexity of the conflict, which is not well understood.

September 26th, 2018

¹ See <https://www.icvanetwork.org/resources/principles-partnership>.

Annex 1: List of Panellists²

Day 1

1) Key messages from civil society consultations³

Cameroon:

- Marthe Wandou, Action Locale pour un Développement Participatif et Autogéré (ALDEPA)
- Adder Abel Gwoda, African Positive Peace Initiatives (APPIC/COSC-CRT)

Chad:

- Abdelkerim Kodbe Nang-Andi, Organisation Humanitaire et du Développement
- Pierre Valiquette, CARE International

Niger:

- Alhossaini Ahmidou, SONAH

Nigeria:

- Hussaini Abdu, Plan International
- Ambassador Ahmed Shehu, Borno Civil Society
- Peter M. Egwudah, Network of NGOs Adamawa

Day 2

2) Civil Society-Led Segment 1: Addressing needs from a humanitarian and development perspective

- Hauwa Bah Abubakar, Yobe CSO Network
- Hussaini Abdu, INGO Representative Nigeria, Country Director Plan International Nigeria
- Edward Kallon, RC/HC Nigeria
- Liz Ahua, Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Nigeria/Lake Chad Basin crisis, UNHCR
- Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, Expert/Academic (IRD/CEPED/ Prio)
- Daniel Wolvén, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

3) Civil Society-Led Segment 2: People-centred stabilization and a way forward for the Lake Chad region

- Bintou Djibo, RC/HC Niger
- Marthe Wandou, ALDEPA
- Father John Bakeni, for Caritas Nigeria/Maiduguri
- Pierre Valiquette, CARE International
- Father Atta Barkindo, The Kukah Center
- Rüdiger König, Head of DG Stabilization, German Foreign Ministry

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² Moderator for all three panels was Ms. Manisha Thomas.

³ Mark Lowcock (UN Emergency Relief Coordinator), Achim Steiner (UNDP Administrator), Thomas Staal (Agency Counselor, USAID) and Fr. Atta Barkindo (Director, The Kukah Center) were kind enough to give short responses from the floor.