



The Humanitarian Crisis in the Lake Chad Basin Region

A Review of the Prevailing Conditions one year after the High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region in Berlin 2018

September 2019



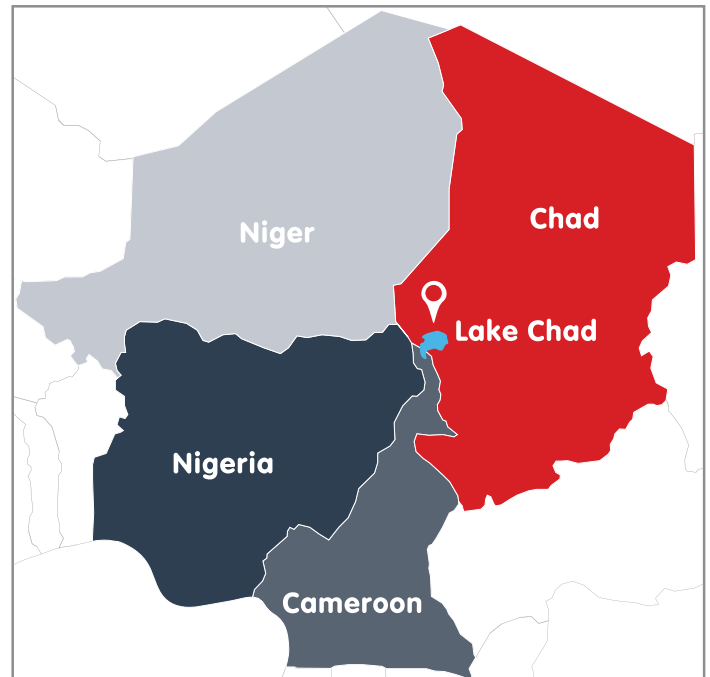
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One of the world's largest humanitarian crises continues to unfold in the Lake Chad region with 17 million people living in the most affected areas in the four riparian countries Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The region is facing extreme poverty, conflict, and climate change with frequent droughts and famines. In the last years the instability of the region increased, the economies slowed down or came to a halt, and the humanitarian needs grew traumatically. People in the region suffer from malnutrition and hunger; up to half a million children suffer from severe acute malnutrition.¹ Today, almost 11 million people depend on humanitarian assistance to survive – i.e. half of the population of the Lake Chad Basin.²

The presence of the terrorist group Boko Haram is now entering its tenth year. So far, thousands have been killed, and more than 2.5 million people have been forced to flee inside their country or across borders.³ The presence of Boko Haram came along with the destruction of livelihoods and property, as well as the undermining or devastation of educational, medical and political institutions. The protection of civilians is a severe challenge: women and girls continue to experience high levels of sexual violence; men and boys are vulnerable to forced conscription or abduction into armed groups. All sectors of society face widespread abuse of human rights, abduction, killings, torture, and arbitrary detention.⁴ Humanitarian access remains a key challenge in many of the areas hardest hit by this conflict; meaning that the most vulnerable people are excluded from humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, ten years after the start of the violence in the region, and as conflict dynamics change over time, a significant number of internally displaced people (IDPs) have voluntarily returned to their communities: Return movements in the Lake Chad Basin increased by 77% from 2016 to 2018, an increase of 800.000 people.⁵ However, thousands more have been forcibly returned to their places of origin, mostly motivated by political tensions and, in many cases



without full disclosure of the safety of areas of return. This poses an additional challenge for humanitarian assistance.

Tensions over land rights have fuelled conflicts throughout the region. People's access to fertile land has become more challenging with increasing desertification, and other climate-induced and demographic pressures, together with previously displaced IDPs returning to their places of origin. For displaced communities and returnees, access to land is an even more acute problem.⁶

Whilst bombing and suicide attacks primarily aimed at civilians, in addition to fights between government forces, oppositions, as well as splinter groups of Boko Haram and Boko Haram itself, continue and even escalate in some regions, there is no sign that this crisis will be subsiding in the near future. Needs in the affected regions remain acute and will continue to persist at large scale in this and the following years.

¹ Lake Chad Basin Emergency: Revised Requirements and Response Priorities. September 2018. Source: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LCB_HNRO_Sep_2018_EN_web.pdf ² German Federal Office: German support for stabilisation in the Lake Chad region. Source: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/krisenpraevention/stabilisation-lake-chad/2234000>, 18.07.2019.

³ The 2019 IOM report on regional displacement and human mobility in the Lake Chad Basin is even talking about around 4.2 million displaced individuals were identified by the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. An additional 250,000 people are displaced in Niger's Diffa region and were tracked by the government of Niger. ⁴ An attempt find an answer to the Boko Haram insurgency was the agreement for the operationalization of the Multi National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 2015. ⁵ In total 1.810.592 people returned in the Lake Chad Basin. Source: International Organisation for Migration (IOM): Within and beyond borders: Tracking displacement in the Lake Chad Basin. Regional Displacement and Human Mobility Analysis Displacement Tracking Matrix; March 2019: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LCBC%20Regional%20DTM%20-%20Human%20Mobility%20Analysis%20-%20March%202019.pdf> ⁶ Caritas Position Paper: Lake Chad Basin Humanitarian Crisis. August 2018.

For more than 10 years, the terrorist group Boko Haram has been responsible for flight, displacement, and terror among the population of the Lake Chad Basin. Especially the northeast of Nigeria is affected by this crisis. The destruction of the country and its infrastructure by Boko Haram deprives people of their livelihood and forces them to flee to neighbouring areas or countries. Armed attacks in the affected states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe have escalated in recent months and around 7.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance this year, out of a population of 13.4 million people, which is equal to 53 percent of the population in the three states.⁷ Since the beginning of 2019, the numbers of newly displaced civilians and new arrivals from suspended areas increased dramatically – more than 60.000 have been reported so far. In total around 1.8 million people are internally displaced in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe due to armed attacks and military operations; further, new displacement is ongoing. Especially in the state of Borno – the most affected region – refugee camps reached or exceed their limits by far: over 80 percent of IDPs are in Borno state.⁸ However, over 60 percent of the displaced people live in host communities, which puts additional pressure on the communities and makes it more difficult to reach people in need. Not all people in need can be reached: due to the insecure situation, there are

areas which are inaccessible. It is estimated that more than 800.000 people cannot be reached. 80 percent of the aforementioned IDPs are women and children. They face high risks of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual exploitation and/or abduction.

However, there are indicators that the conditions in some locations improved: Since 2015 around 1.6 million people have returned home.⁹



Eva Disegna (left) in conversation with partners

Sexual and gender-based violence in the Lake Chad Basin

“This crisis in the Lake Chad region affects women and girls in particular: many of them are used as suicide bombers, they are subjected to forced labour and/or marriages, and after having been able to escape or having been rescued from Boko Haram, they often face stigmatization and social marginalization. It is estimated that at least over 7,000 girls and women have suffered from sexual violence, perpetrated by Boko Haram since their existence in 2009. However, the number of unreported cases is undoubtedly much higher. Another challenge embodies the impunity for perpetrators and the severe need to strengthen the legal system, as well as to ensure access and assistance to justice and psychological support. Moreover, women and girls face sexual exploitation in general throughout the displacement crisis: by security forces and authorities, the military, or even humanitarian aid works, often involving transactional sexual services to access food or non-food items. The risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) increases further due to the breakdown of family ties or social structures and consequently leads to disadvantaged changes in gender roles and responsibilities. Commonly, minor girls are married off, as they are seen as financial burdens to their families – domestic violence often continues thereafter.”

Eva Disegna, Advisor for emergency and transitional aid, Caritas Nigeria, Abuja

⁷ Especially in the course of the presidential elections in spring 2019, the security situation worsened dramatically and the region was shaken by attacks. Source: INSO World Alerts.

⁸ An example is the camp „Teachers Village “in Maiduguri which has a population of 30.000 people, but only has capacities for up to 10.000 displaced people.

⁹ UN-OCHA: Humanitarian Needs overview 2019. Source: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/01022019_ocha_nigeria_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

Cameroon

In the Lake Chad Basin, Cameroon is the second most affected country by the Boko Haram crisis. More than one out of six people in Cameroon need humanitarian assistance, which is an increase of 31 percent since 2018. The number of people living as refugees or IDPs is twice as high as one year ago, which adds Cameroon on the scale of one of the fastest growing displacement crises in Africa in 2018. The Far North region is heavily affected with around 1.9 million people depending on humanitarian aid (more than 50 percent of the population), and more than 248,000 people being internally displaced. The number of refugees from Nigeria entering into Cameroon is increasing: around 102.000 of Nigerians have sought safety in this region. More people are likely to flee into Cameroon due to both, the growing insecurity in north-east Nigeria, and large-scale military operations launched in the Lake areas. Violence is resurging since the last quarter of 2018 leading to new high numbers of displacement. Moreover, the high level of insecurity in the affected areas bears a significant risk of protection for civilians. At the same time, humanitarian access to refugees and IDPs is limited, due to the uncertain security situation. Three million people are food insecure, including 222.000 children below the age of five, who suffer from acute or severe malnutrition. Youth-unemployment is a severe challenge. With half of the population aged below 18 years, alongside with poverty rates of 74 percent, young people are exposed to recruitment by terrorist groups and child rights violations.¹⁰



Alain Deoulengar, Caritas Tschad (left) and Edouard Kaldapa, Caritas Maroua-Mokolo (right) at the Lake Chad Conference in Berlin, 2018.

“Boko Haram is very active with new attacks on military posts and villages. The insecurity remains one of the main challenges. Others are the high rate of youth unemployment – there are no opportunities for them, many roads are destroyed, people have no access to land. The region of the far-north is steadily regressing in terms of development and depends heavily on humanitarian assistance.”

Edouard Kaldapa, Caritas Maroua-Mokolo



Our partner voices:

Marthe Wandou, Far North Region, Cameroon

On the current humanitarian situation:

“Since May this year we are again experiencing attacks on a regular basis: Civilians become hostages of Boko Haram, they attack the villages and burn everything and they slaughter men, women, and children. People are again traumatized. Roads are destroyed and many schools are closed, because the situation is too dangerous. Internal displaced persons would like to go back to their places, but because of the poor security situation it is not possible. Many international organisations and also some NGOs are not able to help the civilians in the affected areas, as the security situation is so bad that they refuse to go to there. They work through national and local partner organisations in order to implement the humanitarian assistance – but of course this is very difficult as the places are not secure. We have to balance the risk every day.”

On the Lake Chad Basin Conference in Berlin 2018:

“In Berlin, we as a civil society from the four countries around the lake had much more time to express our positions than we had before in Oslo – that gave us strength and impact to work on. Having a whole day for civil society was very important for us. But unfortunately, the Lake Chad conference did not have that much of an impact for us. We feel that most of the financial commitments given by the donors go to international Organizations. For us as local NGOs, it is not possible to get access to UN-funds and proposals of regional organizations, which is the greatest challenge – the national and local Civil Society in the Lake Chad countries need to benefit more from the financial contributions.

On a positive note, the conference in Berlin helped to foster cooperation among the national NGOs in Cameroon. We coordinate more closely with each other and share information on humanitarian assistance. It is important for us to speak with one voice, to make us visible for the international community and to share information about the situation in the field.”

Marthe Wandou – Director of ALDEPA, one partner organization of Caritas Germany in Cameroon – participated in the Oslo and Berlin conference on the Lake Chad region.

¹⁰ UN-OCHA: Cameroon. Humanitarian Response Plan. Jan 2019: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_cmr_hrp_20190219_summary_print.pdf

Chad

The humanitarian crisis in Chad remains severe. The population has to face violence, displacement, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as lack of essential services, such as health care. The insecure situation across the Lake Chad Basin forced thousands of civilians to seek refuge in the western province of Chad. The area is also struck by re-emerging violence. Armed attacks increased since the beginning of a joint military operation in Nigeria this year.¹¹ As a consequence hundreds of people, who are forced to flee, are reported every month. Around 40.000 people have been newly displaced in the province since the beginning of 2019. In total there are almost up to 657.000 displaced persons in Chad, including 450.000 refugees, mainly from Nigeria, the Central African Republic and Sudan and fresh displacement of communities already uprooted from their homes by insecurity. The level of food insecurity is high, as the level of insecurity, and closed borders with Nigeria and Niger limit the access to markets. Several aid organizations

stopped working in the region, following numerous raids in March and April, which led to a deteriorated security situation.¹² Thus, access for humanitarian actors is often limited. Due to the prevailing dysfunctional health system and low immunization coverage,¹³ together with widespread poverty, the population is exposed to diseases and epidemics, such as malaria or cholera. The mortality rate in Chad (133/1.000) remains among the highest in the world.¹⁴

Niger

In Niger, 2.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.3 million children.¹⁵ The country is facing food insecurity and malnutrition, epidemics, floods, and displacement.¹⁶ Especially the south-eastern Diffa region is affected by the crisis. Several villages and military sites have been attacked, and around 18.500 people have been uprooted. Humanitarian organizations distribute water, food, and utensils. Due to the insecure situation, many schools have been closed in the region.



¹¹ A joint Nigeria-Chad military operation against Boko Haram in the Wulgo area of Borno state in April was carried out. A combined multinational formation – the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) – comprising mostly military units from Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Benin, was formed to bring the Boko Haram insurgency to an end. ¹² USAID: Lake Chad Basin - Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #5, Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. Source: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/lake_chad_ce_fs05_06-24-2019.pdf ¹³ According to UN-OCHA the coverage accounts for 10 and 37 percent of the population. ¹⁴ UN-OCHA: Chad: "US\$476,6M urgently needed to reach 2M people struggling with hunger, displacement and epidemics". Source: <https://www.unocha.org/story/chad-us4766m-urgently-needed-reach-2m-people-struggling-hunger-displacement-and-epidemic> ¹⁵ UN-OCHA: Cameroon. Humanitarian Response Plan. Jan 2019. ¹⁶ UNICEF: Niger Humanitarian Situation Report, May 2019. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/unicef-niger-humanitarian-situation-report-may-2019>



From Oslo...

In February 2017 more than 170 representatives of donor organisations, states, regional organizations and civil society met for the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region. They pledged US\$672 million for 2017 and beyond as a means for the necessary humanitarian response.¹⁷ The conference was co-hosted by Norway, Nigeria, Germany, and the UN. Humanitarian partners agreed to “further scale up their response to reach the most vulnerable groups threatened by famine, including children with severe acute malnutrition. Special attention was given to the protection needs of women, children and youth, as well as the need for longer-term support and durable solutions for the displaced populations”.¹⁸ According to the German Federal Foreign Office, more than six million people were reached with assistance in 2017, and in north-east Nigeria a famine was averted.¹⁹

A positive outcome of the Oslo conference was the birth of the Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilisation in the Lake Chad Region, with the aim to provide a strategic platform for discussion and for fostering regional cooperation to address factors driving the crisis.²⁰ Also, the governments of the affected states, the regional organisations, Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, and other actors became more active in addressing the challenges. Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, under the aegis of the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, adopted a stabilisation strategy.²¹

On the sub-national level, politicians created the Lake Chad Governor’s Forum with the aim to foster regional cross-border cooperation. The Forum met in Maiduguri in May 2018 for the first time.

...to Berlin...

Building on the commitments made in Oslo and the follow-up processes, the co-hosts of the conference decided

to organise a second conference on the region: The Lake Chad Conference in Berlin in September 2018 was born. In addition to the humanitarian aspects, the conference should also promote crisis prevention and stabilization initiatives, and focus on the humanitarian-development-peace/stabilization nexus in order to meet the needs of the people affected by the crisis.

The High-Level Conference focused on how the international community, regional partners and affected governments could best work together to address the crisis, and aim to facilitate new financial resources. As a result, the 17 UN Member States, the European Commission, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank pledged US\$2.17 billion in support. Moreover, multilateral financial institutions announced US\$467 million in concessional loans.²²

As part of the high-level conference on the Lake Chad region, Caritas Germany and Plan International were invited by the host government to organize three civil society-led panels over the two days: On the morning of the first day and just prior to the official opening of the high-level conference, civil society representatives had the chance to provide feedback from their in-country consultations. The civil society consultations were organized by OCHA country offices with civil society (national NGOs, civil society organizations, and international NGOs) in the four countries. During the panel, a number of issues and concerns common to the four countries were outlined, such as the need to ensure a regional approach in all programmes, as many of the root causes of the conflict are cross border conflicts. Also, programmes need to be delivered in areas affected by the conflict, but also in areas that have not been affected by the conflict in order to ensure that tensions do not arise and to further prevent the conflict from spreading. On the second day, one panel, involving different stakeholders and civil society representatives from the regions, addressed the needs from a humanitarian and development perspective. The panelists stated, for example, that protection programmes are in need of more funding, including programmes, focused on education and reintegration. Also, coordination requires continuing improvements that involve all actors, and violence and violations, particularly affecting women, girls, and children, must be addressed. The second civil society panel addressed the

¹⁷ Pledges of US\$458 million for 2017 and \$214 million for 2018 and beyond announced by 14 donors. Pledges were announced by the European Commission, Norway, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Italy, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Republic of Korea. ¹⁸ Oslo Humanitarian Conference: Summary, February 24, 2017. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Joint%20PR%20OsloHumConf%20FINAL.pdf> ¹⁹ Early Recovery: High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region. Source: <http://earlyrecovery.global/content/high-level-conference-lake-chad-region> ²⁰ The group met for the first time in Sept 2017 in Berlin. ²¹ German Federal Foreign Office: High Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region in Berlin results in 2.17 billion US dollars in pledges of assistance. Source: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/ausussenpolitik/themen/humanitaerhilfe/lake-chad-conference/2132000> ²² High Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region. Summary, September 3/4th, 2018. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/high-level-conference-berlin-commits-comprehensive-crisis-response-lake-chad-region>.



Panelists and Organizers of the exchange with Civil Society.

topic people-centred stabilization, and focused on the way forward for the Lake Chad region.

It became clear that as the crisis is multi-dimensional, also, there is a need to have multi-dimensional approaches to stabilization. The panelists provided different suggestions of how to practically put people at the centre of stabilization efforts and suggested a 'new' triple nexus to make people-centered stabilization efforts successful: 1) confidence (in the processes), 2) trust (among all stakeholders), and 3) inclusion.²³

and Beyond...

The two conferences scaled up the financial support for the region significantly – but at the same time, the numbers also display the dramatic humanitarian situation in the region and the need for support. Moreover, the conferences brought the region and the Boko Haram crisis to the attention of the international community. The humanitarian crisis in the region has been on the table at the UN Security Council, has been mentioned in international conferences, such as at the High-Level conference on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises in Oslo in May this year. The crisis was also a topic in negotiations in Brussels between the European Union and the government of Nigeria. Also, some countries increased their support for fighting the crises in the region, such as the German Government, which increased its support by a further 40 million this year, in order to support a new approach to stabilization.²⁴

According to the German Foreign Ministry more than 99 percent of the pledges made at the Berlin Conference, are already fulfilled (August 2019). To the disappointment of many civil society representatives, many of the pledges made in Berlin were already allocated for specific programmes or UN-Agencies, such as UNHCR. This means, that the national or local organizations in the region did not have the chance to apply for those financial means – as they were initially hoping for. Also, and in contrast to the fulfillment of the pledges, the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) reveal a gap in funding for the affected countries: For example for Nigeria only, 39.4% of the total financial means required are funded, which leads to a financial gap of \$513.5 million.²⁵

On the regional level, the Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilisation in the Lake Chad Region aims to support regional stakeholders to find regional, cross-border solutions to the crisis. The regional strategy for stabilization, reconstruction and resilience in the regions affected by Boko Haram, is one outcome of the joint efforts. Adopted by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, this strategy aims to help implement the decisions made at the Lake Chad Conference in Berlin in 2018.²⁶ Also on the sub-national level in the countries activity can be tracked: representatives of eight provinces in the Lake Chad region met for the second time for the Lake Chad Governor's Forum in the Niger capital Niamey in July 2019 to discuss ways to overcome the crisis and stabilise the region.²⁷

Civil Society representatives meet on a regular basis on a national and international level to exchange information and to organize a common position which is, for example, addressed to UN-OCHA or UNDP. According to Caritas Germany partner organizations, the Berlin Conference helped to organize the national Civil Societies and to identify active representatives. However, Civil Society is still not an integral part of political consultations.²⁸ NGO representatives, for example, were not invited to attend the second Lake Chad Governor's Forum in Niamey/Niger in July this year. However, Civil Society representatives met one month before the Forum at a civil society meeting, organized by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and UNDP.

²³ High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region. Summary and Recommendations from Civil Society-led Panels. Berlin, Germany, 3-4 September 2018. Source: <https://www.caritas-international.de/wa-sunsbewegt/stellungnahmen/tshadsee-konferenz-2018-zusammenfassung> ²⁴ German Federal Foreign Office: German support for stabilisation in the Lake Chad region. Source: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/ausussenpolitik/themen/krisenpraevention/stabilisation-lake-chad/2234000>, 18.07.2019. ²⁵ UN-OCHA: Nigeria. Source: <https://www.unocha.org/nigeria>. ²⁶ REGIONAL STRATEGY for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rss-ab-vers-en...pdf>, August 2018. ²⁷ Conversation with Marthe Wandou, ALDEPA, August 26th, 2019. Caritas Germany headquarters, Freiburg, Germany. ²⁸ A national Civil Society Platform, for example, was established in Cameroon after the Oslo conference and strengthened after the Berlin Conference. After the Berlin Conference the national NGOs in Cameroon meet for a workshop in order to plan the implementation of the decisions of the Berlin Conference. The feedback was given to UN-OCHA, the inter-sectoral meeting in Cameroon and other NGOs in Cameroon.

One year after the conference many actors which have been involved in the Berlin conference would like to see more visible and concrete outcomes for the Lake Chad region. In the region, no or little improvement can be observed. In many parts of the region, the heightened security situation led to limitations in the implementation of humanitarian assistance and measures, planned at the Berlin Conference. However, the Berlin conference showed that there is a need for collective efforts by all different actors involved in various levels to address this complex crisis and further, in order to resolve the conflict, political representatives need to act in concert.

The way forward: Recommendations²⁹

- **Funding:** All donors of the Lake Chad conferences, as well as the Grand Bargain signatories, must ensure that they fulfill their commitments to increase funding to local actors. Local actors/ NGOs should have access to financial pledges. Due to high thresholds in international proposals, it is extremely difficult for local actors to be considered – often their only possibility is to serve as sub-contractors for international organizations.
- **Localisation and Inclusion:** Numerous Local Actors in the Lake Chad Region feel, that they are not considered as equal partners. International humanitarian actors must ensure that national and local actors are at the centre of coordination and decision-making in humanitarian response: There is a need to work through existing local organizations and local actors to build on their experiences, existing peace-building models and capacities. Many of them like the church organizations are Nexus specialists as they have been working on interreligious dialogue, justice, peace, and development already before the Boko Haram crisis erupted and will still work on these issues when international NGOs will have gone. It is essential to put people at the centre and to involve communities in responding to humanitarian needs, and to further engage women and youths, in order to understand what they think is required for meeting their specific needs. When working with refugees and displaced persons, it is important to look at the impact of the conflict on the population as a whole and to pay special attention to the hosting communities.

- **Access:** Access to populations in need presents one of the most crucial challenges that must be tackled through more dialogue and coordination between all parties. Coordination requires continued improvements that involve all actors (i.e. different levels of government, UN, donors, local/national/international NGOs, and civil society organizations). Moreover, the closed borders exacerbate access challenges. Governments are called to be committed to finding ways to ensure access to all populations in need.
- **Protection:** Despite the urgent calls in the final declaration of the Berlin conference, protection has not improved over the last year. The protection commitments of humanitarian actors must be operationalized at the programme level, and donors should ensure the funding needed to monitor adherence to highest protection standards. Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria need to implement their commitments and need to support humanitarian and non-governmental actors to strengthen their protection components. Women and girls are still, in some regions more than ever, targeted by Boko Haram and experience high levels of sexual violence.
- **SGBV:** The response to sexual and gender-based violence across the region needs to be improved through prevention, as well as through appropriate and adequate support for survivors. Education on prevention, intervention/response and rehabilitation on SGBV throughout all community levels, in particular for boys and men, is needed. Military forces must be trained to work in a sensitive manner with women and youths, particularly those who have been victims of SGBV. Psychological support, access to health care and legal resources for victims of SGBV need to be provided. Further, there is a need for prosecution of perpetrators of SGBV, and an appropriate penalty, as continuing impunity of those perpetrators leads to an enforced culture of silence.
- **Regional Approach:** Many of the root causes of the conflict are cross-border, making a regional approach in all programmes necessary. Therefore, a regional strategy is needed to ensure a common approach towards the reintegration of returnees. Governments of the four countries around the Lake Chad Basin should encourage local peaceful coexistence by collaboration and by pooling social services in the border areas (for example medical facilities, infrastructure and vocational training).

²⁹ Many of these recommendations were already formulated by representatives of Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Nigeria, Caritas Tschad, Caritas Maroua-Mokolo, Caritas Norway, CAFOD, ALDEPA and Caritas Germany in August 2018. Please find this Caritas Position Paper on the Lake Chad Humanitarian Crisis here: <https://www.caritas-international.de/wasunsbewegt/stellungnahmen/tshadsee-konferenz-2018-positionspapier>

ning), integration of the economies, and facilitation of police procedures to ensure free movement of goods and people. The 10-year-old conflict has its roots in decades of neglect of marginalized regions in the respective countries.

- **Community Cohesion and Peacebuilding:** Governments should work with communities and civil society groups to develop inclusive peace-building frameworks, which take a bottom-up approach working from the community level to national level. Especially the sensitive issue of demobilization and reintegration of fighters need an intensive preparation of and dialogue with local host communities. Programmes need to be delivered 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.
- **Returns:** Governments must ensure that IDPs are given clear and unbiased information in order to make decisions as to whether to return to their homes. All returns must be safe, voluntary and dignified, and people must be supported to repair their damaged homes and given humanitarian assistance and basic services. Refoulement is against International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
- **Land rights:** Tensions over land rights fuelled conflicts throughout the region. People's access to fertile land has become more challenging with climate-induced and demographic pressures, together with previously displaced IDPs returning to their places of origin. Govern-

ments need to establish clear regulatory frameworks to address land issues such as ownership, purchase, and leasing. Governments should also implement a clear policy on the provision of land and housing for returnees to ensure the transparent allocation of land in close proximity to services and local communities. The lack of clear rules for access to land for small-scale farmers is a direct driver of the conflict and might lead to easy recruitment by Boko Haram.

- **Civil Documents:** Governments should increase the prevalence of civil documents, such as birth certificates, identity documents, marriage certificates, and death certifications. Without birth certificates, pupils, for example, cannot gain access to secondary schools and people cannot vote.
- **Livelihoods:** Comprehensive approaches supporting livelihoods and resilience of crisis-affected populations are needed. Donors should support livelihoods programmes which enable people to provide for themselves and their families.
- **Education:** Countries within the Lake Chad Basin have some of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. Therefore, the provision of good quality school education needs to be increased and governments, as well as humanitarian actors, should devise education programmes, which contribute towards building an active civil society with communities being aware of their rights and knowing how to adhere to them.





©Corrado Disegna

Our work in the Lake Chad Region

Since the beginning of 2018, the international department of Caritas Germany provides, with funds of the German Foreign Office, emergency aid and humanitarian assistance for victims of the Boko Haram crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and western Chad. The aim is to improve the living conditions of people affected by the crisis in the region of Lake Chad. Moreover, our work seeks to meet the food security requirements of particularly vulnerable internally displaced persons and host populations especially in the annual lean season and to improve their protection. We work together with our very experienced local partners:

We work together with our very experienced partners The national Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN), the Justice Development Peace Commission of Maiduguri (JDPC) and the Catholic Relief Services of Nigeria (CRS) in Nigeria, the national Caritas Chad/UNAD, the diocesan Caritas organisation SECADEV in the archdiocese of N'Djamena and the Catholic Relief Services of Chad (CRS) in Chad, and in Cameroon with the Caritas-Comité Diocésain de Développement (CDD) in the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo.

One of the project aims is to combat the threatening famine in the affected regions and to support the population with food; further, we aim to provide access to education for about 150.000 affected people.

To this end, access to sufficient food is assured, families receive water pumps, seeds, and savings loans, school fees are being paid, and children receive school books and birth certificates. Moreover, we work together with our partner ALDEPA (Action Locale pour un Développement Participatif et Autogéré) in the Far-East of Cameroon and support displaced girls and women who are affected by gender-based violence. With the Nigerian Kukah centre we work on countering radical extremist narratives and strengthen interreligious cooperation.

The Caritas Network are present in every country throughout the Lake Chad Basin, working with local communities in a variety of ways, including protection of civilians, support for land rights, livelihoods, community cohesion and peace-building, education, health, and promoting localisation and the role of local actors in all aspects of our work. We have a long-term and ongoing commitment to the communities we serve and accompany. We understand their needs and customs and the roots of the many issues of the regional conflicts.



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