

Introduction

Context, challenges and objectives

The Lake Chad region³ is seen as one of the most fragile areas in the world. It has the structural vulnerability characteristic of the Sahel, with its soaring demographic growth tensions in a situation of massive poverty, political fragility, and climate change. The population's young age structure and socio-political obstructions are behind multifaceted tensions (intergenerational, intra- and inter-community, and religious). Added to this is the impact of what appears to be a contained conflict. The Boko Haram group's armed uprising and repression since 2009 form one of the major crisis hotspots on the African continent today, with its share of victims, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, and the looming spectre of famine. In Nigeria alone, the country that has borne the brunt of the conflict, the World Bank estimates the damage at billions of dollars.⁴ The insurgency's combination of a local agenda with a globalised vision of jihadist fundamentalism (Pérouse de Montclos, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017) has brought international attention to the region, which previously received a mention on the world scene only at climate conferences discussing the consequences of the supposed drying up of Lake Chad due to climate change (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014). The Lake Chad region therefore epitomises the many local and global challenges associated with the trajectory of Africa's most fragile spaces and the level of complexity involved in addressing them.

This study is part of the Lake Chad Initiative announced by France in Abuja in May 2016. AFD proposes to raise its commitments to help the region back on its feet. The challenge is twofold. Coordinated actions are needed to assist the emergency–post-conflict–development transition towards a regional approach inclusive of the four countries bordering Lake Chad (Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad). This study aims to pave the way for an AFD intervention analysis platform. The other, directly operational strand concerns a group of projects designed to alleviate the sources of conflict and build the population's resilience. Among these, the Regional Economic and Social Inclusive Recovery Project for

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3 In this report, this expression will refer to the study area as defined by the authors (see below).

4 The World Bank's calculation in its 2015 *Recovery and Peace Building Assessment* (RPBA) estimates that the fighting has caused output losses of 8.3 billion US dollars (USD) and infrastructure damage of USD 9.2 billion, not counting the impact of an economic crisis brought about by falling oil prices in a country that earns most of its foreign-denominated revenues from oil production.

Lake Chad (RESILAC) supports the autonomy of displaced persons in the four lakeside countries with small-scale agricultural activities.

The study's purpose is to: (i) provide a multidisciplinary assessment of the current situation, and (ii) explore the way forward. The appendices propose indicators to capture the political, security, economic, demographic, societal, and environmental dynamics of a region that forms a system, to find ways to best adjust aid mechanisms and support public policies. These indicators are qualitative and are midway between macro indicators (national level) and those specifically designed for development project monitoring. The aim is ultimately to outline a blueprint for an analytical platform that can collect and analyse these data, while initiating dialogue between researchers in the countries bordering Lake Chad and between researchers and the humanitarian, diplomatic, and international and national development players.

The study area as a regional system

We propose making sense of the region's complexity by studying it as a system. It is in effect a space profoundly structured by mobility and trade. Straddling four countries following colonisation, it features strong cross-border dynamics rooted in history and stimulated by differences in custom duties, speculation on exchange rates, and urban demand found within the study area, and between the study area and external centres (especially the southern regions of Nigeria and Cameroon). Capturing the Lake Chad region's challenges hence calls for a constantly dual national–regional analysis, taking account of the concerns, networks, and movements that transcend the national borders.

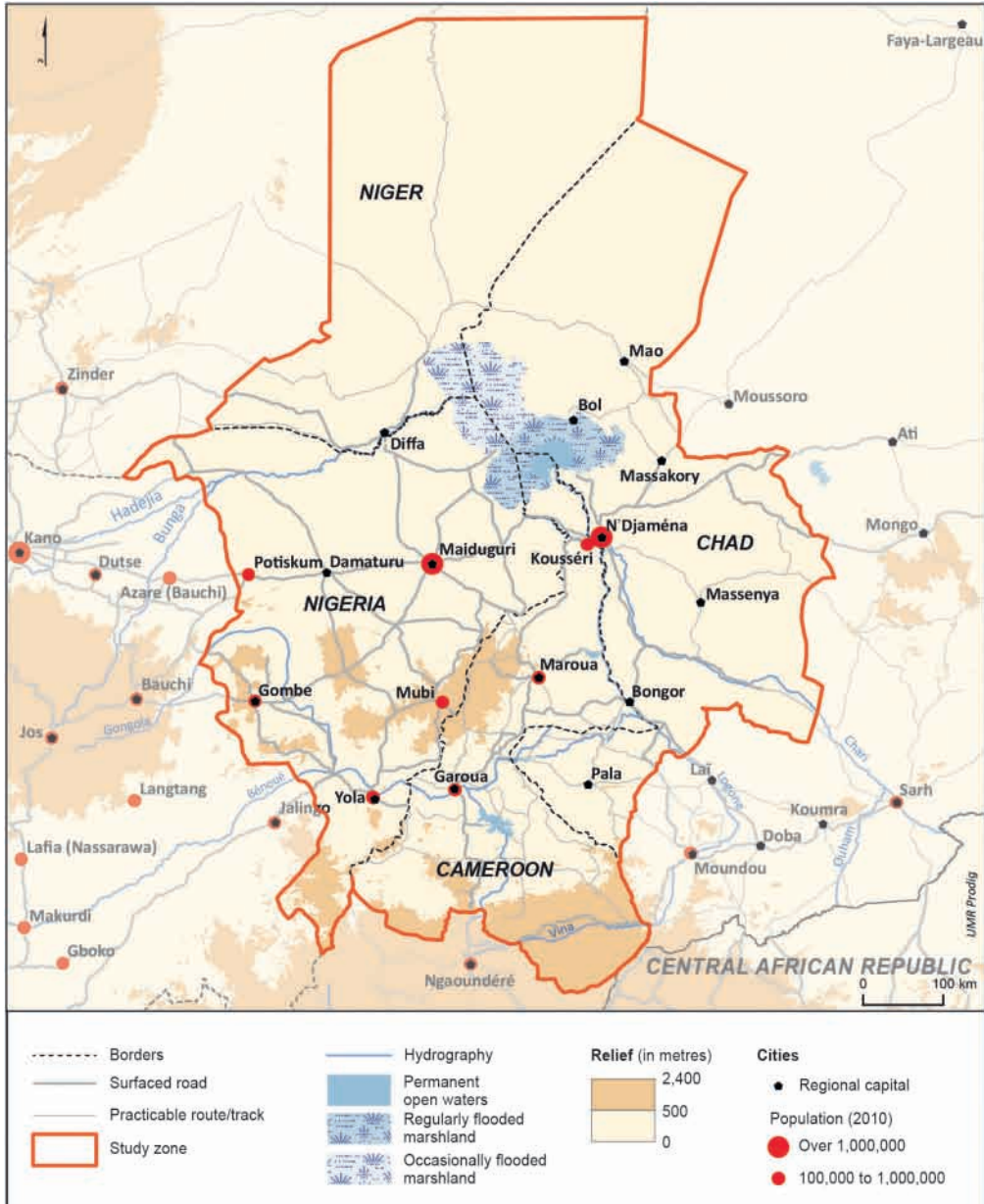
The internal diversity of the Lake Chad region's system is fairly high. It is structured today by three main hubs: Lake Chad itself, a wetlands area with some two million inhabitants and high agro-halieuic-pastoral potential; and two metropolises with seven-figure populations—N'Djaména, the Chadian capital, and Maiduguri, capital of the Nigerian State of Borno—which head a network of secondary urban centres and rural markets.

The system's interdependencies are based on flows (trade, migration, mobility, and investment) that transit between, on one side, the cities and the most productive, high-potential rural areas—albeit subject to varying demographic pressure depending on how long farming has been established—and less well-endowed areas on the other. The Lake Chad region consequently considered here covers an elongated area stretching approximately 1,000 kilometres (km) from north to south and 500 km from east to west (see Map 1), representing a surface area comparable to France. Rainfall is higher than 400 mm⁵ over only

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5 Rainfall threshold usually given for rainfed crops.

Map 1. The Lake Chad region



Sources: PlantadivGIS, OSM, SRTM, Africapolis.

Table 1. Basic geographic data on the study zone

COUNTRY	REGION	Surface area km ²	Previous census: Cameroon 1987, Niger 1988, Nigeria 1991, Chad 1993	Latest census: Cameroon 2005, Niger 2012, Chad 2009	% pop. Study region/national total	2012 estimate (3% annual growth)	2017 estimate (3% annual growth)	Density per km ² in 2017
Nigeria	Adamawa	30,805	2,102,053	3,178,950	2.26	3,795,833	4,400,410	142.85
	Borno	60,567	2,477,408	4,171,104	2.97	4,980,516	5,773,783	95.33
	Gombe	16,461	1,489,120	2,365,040	1.68	2,823,981	3,273,768	198.88
	Yobe	41,861	1,399,687	2,321,339	1.65	2,771,800	3,213,276	76.76
NIGERIA (study area)		149,695	7,468,268	12,036,433	8.57	14,372,130	16,661,238	111.30
NIGERIA total				140,431,790				
Chad	Kanem	63,855	379,323	333,387	2.98	364,301	422,325	6.61
	Lac	18,449	308,974	451,359	4.04	493,212	571,768	30.99
	Hadjer-Lamis	28,000	512,642	562,957	5.04	615,158	713,137	25.47
	Chari-Baguirmi	42,023	437,068	621,785	5.56	679,441	787,659	18.74
	Mayo-Kebbi Ouest	11,163		565,087	5.06	617,486	715,835	64.13
	Mayo-Kebbi Est				0.00			
	N'Djaména	361	530,000	993,492	8.89	1,085,616	1,258,526	3 489.20
CHAD (study area)		163,851		3,528,067	31.57	3,855,214	4,469,250	27.28
CHAD total				11,175,915				
Cameroon	Far North	31,591	1,855,695	3,481,904	19.94	4,282,303	4,964,363	157.14
	North	59,543		1,687,959	9.67	2,075,977	2,406,626	40.42
CAMEROON (study area)		91,135		5,169,863	29.60	6,358,279	7,370,988	80.88
CAMEROON total				17,463,836				
Niger	Diffa	138,149	346,595	591,788	3.45	591,788	627,828	4.54
NIGER (study area)		138,149		591,788	3.45	591,788	627,828	4.54
NIGER total				17,129,076				
TOTAL STUDY AREA		Surface area km²		Latest census		2012 estimate	2017 estimate	Density per km² in 2017
		542,829		21,326,151		25,177,412	29,129,304	53.66

Sources: Cameroon census: BUCREP/RGPH 1987 & 2005; Nigeria: NBS-Census Data 1991 & 2006; Niger: INS-RGPH 1988 & 2012; Chad: INSEED-RGPH 1993 & 2009.

about half of this surface area. Demographic projections calculated from the most recent national censuses estimate the region's inhabitants at over 29 million in 2017 (see Table 1).

Nature of the crisis and the current situation

The Boko Haram crisis has profoundly shaken this regional system and laid bare many structural fragilities. At central government level, there is dependency on oil revenues (less marked in Cameroon and Niger), corruption, brutal repression, and difficulties in managing conflicts peacefully. At regional level, there are such issues as widespread food vulnerability, localised land tensions, rural banditry, and multifaceted government dysfunctions. However, the size of the area considered (approximately 565,000 km²) and the significance of intra-regional differences (bioclimatic: from the Saharan Desert to the Sudanic savannas; between mountains and plains, sometimes occupied by wetlands; between cities and isolated rural areas; and among countries) are such that we need to consider the diversity of the crisis impacts. The conflict's epicentre is in Borno State, Nigeria. Yet certain border areas have been extremely hard hit, such as Diffa in Niger, Kolofata in Cameroon, and some Lake Chad islands. More outlying regions less directly affected by the crisis have also been hit by its shockwaves, with the interruption of herding movements and trade flows, and the reconfiguration of certain mobilities.

So the regional system's order has been severely disrupted and then reorganised. Its settlement and seasonal mobility patterns have been partially reconfigured. At the same time, urban centres have changed. Maiduguri has become an emergency capital hosting large numbers of internally displaced persons and aid agencies, but it has lost its central place in regional trade. Trade flows are now re-routed further south (via southern Chad and Gombe) through to the Gulf of Guinea's urban markets or otherwise bypass the zone of instability by the west.

In the summer of 2017, the Lake Chad region hence finds itself midway between conflict and post-conflict. Boko Haram has had to retreat and no longer controls the areas it did in 2014. Nonetheless, persistent suicide bombings against civilians and attacks against military targets bear testimony to its resilience. Our hypothesis is that the situation will not return to the way it was, even with a military victory over Boko Haram, but that a new regional system is bound to emerge in the wake of this crisis period. Hence the importance of the policy choices to be made.

Methodology

The assessment is based on existing knowledge: benchmarking studies on portions of the study area in a given country—such as Borno (Cohen, 1967) and the Far North of Cameroon (Seignobos & Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000); cross-cutting studies on Lake Chad (Bouquet 1990); co-authored studies such as LCBC⁶/IRD (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014), *l'Atlas du Lac Tchad* (Magrin *et al.*, 2015); and studies on Boko Haram (Pérouse de Montclos, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017) and the Lake Chad Basin (De Zborowski, 1996). We have also drawn on the “grey” literature⁷ produced by institutions active in the crisis. The main references used are listed at the end of each chapter. Sources used once for a specific piece of information are given in footnotes only.

This information was rounded out by four field missions conducted by the French researchers in the countries bordering Lake Chad to collect data provided by local partners interviewed on these occasions. Mission length and movements were restricted by available time and resources, the volatile security situation, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ continued classification of a large part of the study area as a red zone.

The study began in March 2017. The field missions were conducted in May and June 2017. The draft report was submitted on 22 July 2017. Following editing, the final report was delivered on 2 October 2017.

The mission in Niger (14–25 May 2017) was conducted mainly in Diffa. It coincided with an international conference on the de-radicalisation and reintegration of former Boko Haram members, which provided an opportunity for numerous interviews. In Cameroon, the mission was restricted to Maroua from 2 to 12 June 2017. In Chad (1–11 June 2017), interviews were conducted in N’Djaména and around Lake Chad at Bol, Baga Sola, Guitté, and Karal. In Nigeria, interviews took place in Maiduguri, Gombe, Yola, and Abuja from 7 to 21 May 2017.

The forecasting variables and sentinel data were discussed during workshops held in Paris (23–24 March, 19 June, and 6 July 2017) and in N’Djaména (April 2017). The 17th Mega-Chad Conference (Nice, 14–16 June 2017) provided an opportunity to share and discuss the preliminary conclusions. This report also takes on board feedback from a debriefing at AFD on 26 June 2017.

Data quality is seen today as a key challenge in the development field.⁸ The problem concerns first of all the reliability of official statistics, which—produced

6 Lake Chad Basin Commission.

7 Unpublished documents produced by non-scientific structures: NGO reports, development institutions, etc.

8 See Issue 213 of *La Revue Tiers Monde* (2013): “La mesure du développement. Comment science et politique se conjuguent” or Issue 258 of *Afrique Contemporaine* (2016/2) “Gouverner par les nombres en Afrique.”

at national level and aggregated by the international organisations—reflect the dysfunctions of the four governments concerned. Data produced by aid and emergency players are often disparate, sparse, and sporadic in time and space, making them difficult to interpret. One of the study's concerns is consequently to identify cross-sectional indicators and relevant data—to be harnessed where they exist and produced if necessary—in order to monitor developments in the regional system. These questions are analysed in more detail in the study's two appendices.

Another problem in a linguistically highly diverse region concerns changing place names and name spellings. To help the reader, we use the contemporary administrative nomenclature, which is French in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad and English in Nigeria. Hence we use the official term “Borno” rather than “Bornu”, long used by the colonial power but dropped by certain geographers as soon as the 1820s and contested by some experts because it differs from the Kanuri pronunciation (Cohen, 1967). We write Adamawa for the state in the Nigerian federation, but Adamaoua for the Cameroonian administrative area. Also, for the sake of legibility, we use the name Boko Haram (“Western education is sacrilege”) even though the group objects to this derogatory expression and calls itself by other names that have changed over time. Lastly, terms taken from local languages are translated and their vernacular origin noted.

Study structure

The study is structured chronologically.

The first section describes and summarises the regional system before the Boko Haram crisis. It shows first how the study region can be seen as a system with considerable potential and multifaceted vulnerabilities. It addresses the region's environmental challenges, population dynamics, activity and mobility systems, and the trade that links the different elements of the system (Chapter 1). The focus then turns to the historical background, development challenges, governance, and the different political configurations and fragilities (Chapter 2).

The second section considers the repercussions of the Boko Haram crisis on the Lake Chad region, focusing on both disruption to the system and the new balances taking shape in 2017. This section addresses how the Boko Haram movement gradually emerged. It then looks into the spread of the conflict from Nigeria to neighbouring countries before it presents the major controversies over the explanatory factors for the crisis (Chapter 3). The repercussions of the crisis on production systems, mobility, and trade are subsequently analysed (Chapter 4), as are its implications for governance, socio-political balances, and development policies (Chapter 5).

The third and last section explores the way forward. This section considers in turn a certain number of key variables that can be used to monitor development

(Chapter 6). Variables beyond the control of regional players, such as climate change, the international economic context, and demographics, are differentiated from those that can be influenced the most by public policies (security and governance; economic choices; settlement and mobility; inequalities, cultural dynamics, and social relations). Lastly, some of the choices available to national and international development players are analysed. This analysis results in the description of three scenarios, projecting the implications of policy choices for all the system's variables (Chapter 7).

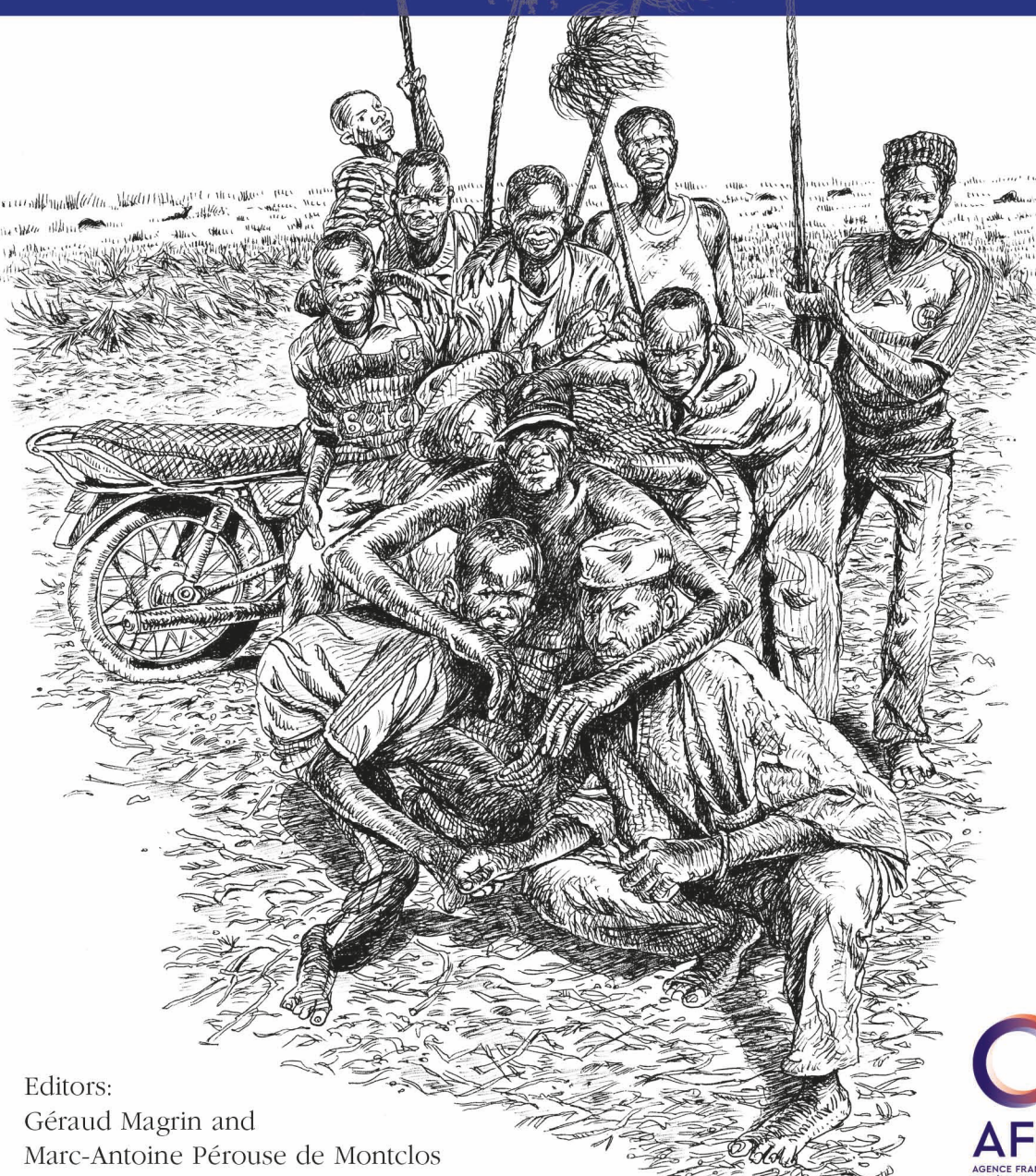
Two appendices round out the study with a discussion of possible sentinel data and indicators for monitoring Lake Chad regional system dynamics. The first introduces methodological challenges regarding the nature of available data, their limitations, and the problems posed by their heterogeneity (Appendix 1). The second discusses a certain number of potential indicators for the main variables studied (Appendix 2).

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Foreword

This report covers the benchmarking study on the Lake Chad region drawn up by the Research Institute for Development (IRD) under the terms of reference provided by the French Agency for Development (AFD). The main findings were obtained from workshops and field missions conducted from March to June 2017.

The introduction was written by Géraud Magrin and Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos.

Chapter 1 was written by Emmanuel Chauvin, Charline Rangé, Jacques Lemoalle, Géraud Magrin, Christine Raimond, Sylvain Aoudou Doua, Hadiza Kiari Fougou, Abdourahmani Mahamadou, Ahmadu Abubakar Tafida, and Abdullahi Liman Tukur.

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Appendix 1 was written by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos.

Appendix 2 was written by the entire team.

The study was reviewed by two IRD researchers, Christian Seignobos and Florence Sylvestre, to whom we are most grateful.