

Chapter 5.

Humanitarian operations, social tensions, and development challenges

KEY POINTS

In 2017, the situation is a combination of two crises. One is military and humanitarian as the fight continues against Boko Haram. The other is economic due to the deterioration in public finances caused by the oil price slump since late 2014, which has more especially hit Nigeria and Chad. This situation has had dramatic impacts on employment. While the military and local militias overpowered civilian authorities, the conflict has instilled a climate of suspicion and fear that has been instrumental in stirring ethnic, religious, and land tenure antagonisms. The humanitarian operations deployed in 2016 have disrupted the political economy in the study zone. The injection of funds and influx of international operators may well have contained the food crisis, but they have also complicated interventions and exacerbated corruption. Diversion of relief items is not the only challenge facing the aid players. There is a crying lack of political vision and coordination at regional level, when the zone's structural under-development should call for crisis responses conceived in terms of construction rather than reconstruction.

1. The observation in summer 2017: A combination of crises

Development challenges had not fundamentally changed in 2017. The situation could be described as a combination of two crises. The first is associated with the violence of the Boko Haram group and its repression, especially in Borno, the Yobe River, Lake Chad, and along the borders between Nigeria and Cameroon. The second crisis, associated with the drop in oil prices since late 2014, is economic and less spectacular. Yet its effects are very visible across the study area, since the funding requirement for action against Boko Haram has hastened the deterioration of public finances and slowed the development machine.

The conflict has also had substantial social repercussions and a strong impact on employment because it hit economic activities and suspended development projects. As the military and local militias overpowered civilian authorities, the crisis has instilled a climate of suspicion and fear that has been instrumental in stirring ethnic, religious, and land-use antagonism. The fight against jihadist

terrorism has done much to stigmatise the Kanuri, Buduma, and Fulani, along with certain social categories such as Koranic pupils and beggars. Although community solidarity has generally transcended religious allegiances, the conflict has also exacerbated religious tensions—for example, in Michika between High Christians and Hausa and Fulani Muslims of southern Borno over control of the municipality and land. Families have been torn apart by forced displacements and armed struggle, with family members fighting on the side of the insurgents while their siblings were mobilised by the government in militia. At the same time, tensions have sometimes developed between locals, internally displaced persons, and refugees. In Nigeria as in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, these have given way to fears of infiltration by Boko Haram combatants in the camps sheltering populations fleeing the conflict.

1.1. Repercussions on employment

In Chad, the public finance crisis, first felt in 2015, effectively delayed and then shut down a certain number of projects funded from oil resources, such as the National Food Security Programme (PNSA). In Niger, the 2012–2016 National Development Plan was also far from achieving its objectives, especially in terms of reducing fertility (Ministère du Plan, 2017). Likewise in Cameroon, MINEPAT's Three-Year Emergency Plan to Accelerate Economic Growth (PLANUT) launched nationwide in 2014 has failed to implement development projects planned for Adamaoua, the Far North, and the North—for instance, the construction of large food markets and the development of 120,000 ha of hydro-agricultural schemes (MINEPAT, 2016).

In Nigeria, the crisis and various dysfunctions have also aborted the North East development plan adopted in October 2014 on the initiative of the six governors (NESTS, 2014). The plan took the form of a classic planning exercise defining short-, medium-, and long-term measures. In agriculture, for instance, it called for less public support, together with private investment and the modernisation of farms. A few months later, a Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE, 2015) was presented, which—following the 2015 elections—took the name of the Presidential Committee for the North East Initiative (PCNI) and proposed a new document entitled the Buhari Plan (PCNI, 2016). These efforts to kick-start development are analysed in more detail in the second part of this chapter.

Note that the combination of these two crises, the Boko Haram crisis and the public finance crisis, has caused a deterioration in the employment situation. The informal sector, which represented a vital part of the regional economy, has been hard hit. Traffic restrictions and bans, designed to dry up Boko Haram's resources and tending to confuse the *zoua zoua* of Cameroon and the *abacha* of Nigeria with group recruits, have hit the youth who had livelihoods in transport (urban motorcycle taxis, different means of urban–village transport, and cross-border movements), trade (agricultural produce, fuel, and manufactured

products), and all associated services (handling, processing, repairs, food stalls, craft trades on the markets, etc.).

The economic crisis associated with the oil price slump has also had a knock-on effect on public sector employment. In Nigeria, a number of North East states have delayed the payment of civil servants. As for Chad, it lost jobs axed in construction and civil engineering and layoffs in the oil sector when Exxon Mobil's oil fields in Doba started becoming depleted and falling oil prices held up the oil exploration conducted by other operators such as the CNPC and Glencore. In N'Djaména, work stopped on some major public construction sites, including a luxury hotel, the Toumaï Palace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. In late 2016, civil servants and students went on strike to protest against the freeze on civil service recruitment, promotion, wages, and arrears.

The situation is not that different in northern Cameroon, where many planning, development, and cooperation projects have been halted, causing a profound feeling of abandonment among the population (Gonné, 2014). In the zones most threatened by insecurity—such as Makari, Darak, Fotokol, Hile Alifa, and Kolofata—the departure of teachers and health workers has not been offset by the arrival of humanitarian organisations. Yet the administration has continued to levy taxes despite the deterioration in public services, even moving its tolls to “the bush” as the Mora–Kousseri road has become impracticable!

Granted, all is not negative. The conflict has attracted the world's attention to long-neglected regions. The deployment of humanitarian organisations has improved access to basic services in certain places. Despite, or owing to, the diversion of international aid, the crisis has moreover offered new opportunities for small local subcontractors and leading Hausa businessmen in the region, such as Aliko Dangote in Nigeria and Issa Balarabé in Cameroon.¹¹⁹

1.2. States of emergency and militia

In the four lakeside countries, the conflict has empowered security forces. Different from martial law, states of emergency have differed in time and space. North-east Nigeria was the first to declare emergency rule, initially in a few LGAs in 2012 and then extended to Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states in May 2013. Cameroon, Niger, and Chad followed suit. It has not always being clear whether

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¹¹⁹ Number one fortune in Africa, ranked 23rd worldwide, Aliko Dangote built his industrial empire in food and subsequently telecommunications and cement. In 2014, he announced his intention to create 180,000 jobs and invest 12 billion US dollars in sugar and rice production in Adamawa State. Issa Balarabé, RDPC baron, father-in-law of a nephew of President Paul Biya and leader of the national truckers' union, has invested in real estate, food, and intra- and inter-urban transport from Maroua. He took advantage of the crisis to control Maroua's motorcycle taxis.

states of emergency were extended tacitly or officially. In principle, they have not been renewed in north-east Nigeria since April 2015 and in the Lac Region in Chad since November 2016. Yet in practice, civil authorities had to yield to security imperatives, as in northern Cameroon. In Chad, the government has created new sub-prefectures run by the military in the Department of Kaya, Lac Region. In Niger, the army also took charge of the Governorate of Diffa in 2015.

In all four countries, civil authorities—modern and traditional—have lost ground in rural areas due, in particular, to the departure of local councillors, traditional chiefs, and religious leaders. Some have fled the fighting. Others have been deliberately killed by the insurgents to destroy the structures and symbols of the state, punish informers who collaborated with the government, or retaliate against chiefs who refused to provide Boko Haram with food and recruits. Official Nigerian government figures estimate that the rebels destroyed 161 of the 190 historical monuments in the BYA states from 2010 to 2015, essentially royal palaces, mosques, and churches. Traditional chiefs have also lost their prestige because they fled to the city and proved incapable of protecting their people. Consequently, many of them can no longer assume the role of informal mediator to solve local disputes about marriages or land allocation.

Also, the elders were sometimes challenged by the youth who formed militias backed by the governments, mainly in Nigeria and Cameroon. In Maiduguri in 2012, the Governor of Borno began supporting and financing vigilantes that took the name of CJTF in 2013. In northern Cameroon, the idea was first put in 2014 for a Christian self-defence coalition in Matal, Zoulgo, Podoko, and Mouktélé in the Arrondissement of Mora. The authorities then pushed for the formation of vigilante committees with more of a religious mix, mainly in Kodro, Amchidé, Fotokol, and Kolofata. Armed with traditional weapons, these militiamen were able to fight on the frontline, patrol the area, and monitor cross-border movements like the military.

Although very different in nature, the governments of Chad and Niger have been more reluctant to support the formation of vigilantes seen by their army as a sign of weakness and a threat to their monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. In 2015, N'Djaména permitted the canton and community leaders of the Lac Region to set up neighbourhood watch committees with volunteers who were sometimes paid by mayors or traders to secure markets. Yet their powers were restricted to intelligence, searches, and surveillance of foreigners in a country whose long history of civil war gives good cause to hand out weapons with care. Niger, on the other hand, wanted to avoid the re-formation of the ethnic militias that had helped the government to fight Tubu rebellions in the 1990s. It refused, for example, to approve the initiative put forward by Fulani herders who, on the pretext of combating Boko Haram, had proposed securing the lake so that they could seize the cattle left there by the Buduma and the Kanuri evacuated by force in 2015.

1.3. Effects of ethnic stigmatisation

The use of militias has also brought to light ethnic stereotypes. In Chad and Niger, the lake's Buduma fishermen have been accused of supporting Boko Haram. All along the Yobe River to the Nigerian border, Kanuri farmers of Chetimari and Mallam Fatori have come under suspicion of collusion with the jihadists, because they refused to leave when the army ordered them to evacuate in 2015. The tensions have sometimes erupted into deadly clashes. In Niger in May, June, and July 2016, Fulani of the N'Guigmi Region attacked the Buduma whom they accused of stealing their cattle to supply Boko Haram.¹²⁰ The Buduma maintained that their attackers' real motive was to recover their herds, which they had to abandon because their cows were used to the lake's swamps and could not follow them in the desert. The same problem appeared in Kiskra in the Liwa Department of Chad to the north-west of Lake Chad in December 2014, when Arab herders refused to share their grazing ground with Buduma who they accused of stealing cattle for Boko Haram.¹²¹ Suspected by the Zaghawa of supporting the insurgents, some Buduma were also excluded from the national guard following clashes in Mossouro barracks in May 2017.

In Nigeria and Cameroon, it is rather the Fulani and the Kanuri who have been suspected of supporting the insurgents. The accusations against them have also served as a mouthpiece for opposition to President Muhammadu Buhari, himself a member of the Hausa–Fulani aristocracy. At the national level, the southern Nigerian press had always deemed Fulani herders responsible for all the attacks against farmers throughout the country. The controversy has become nationwide, opposing lobbies such as the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and the Apex Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN).¹²² On the international scene, neo-conservative institutions have even found a way to class Fulani herders as a “terrorist group” (IEP, 2016)! The bias has been extremely strong. Yet the Fulani are only one of the stakeholders in the issue. Agro-pastoral conflicts have also erupted between farmers, as many Hausa, Kanuri, and Buduma peasants also raise cattle. Moreover, the Fulani are themselves victims of cattle rustling. Field studies show that the perpetrators of

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¹²⁰ The clashes left a death toll of 24 Buduma in Féféwa in May 2016, 17 in Ngorea in June, and 12 in Maraa Kiari in July. Interviews by Hadiza Kiari Fougou in N'Guigmi, 4 July 2017.

¹²¹ At the time, the clashes claimed the lives of three Arabs and nine Budumas. To prevent vendetta, the authorities had to dissuade the Arabs from mounting their own militia against Boko Haram and force them to pay blood money (*diya*) to the families of the Buduma victims. Interview by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos with Dimouya Souapebe, Prefect of Kaya in Baga Sola, 7 June 2017.

¹²² Operational since 1979 and inaugurated in 1987 by the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano, the first lobby is perceived as an exclusively Fulani and Muslim organisation. The second represents the interests of the food industry rather than small producers. This lobby is the product of a merger of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (ALFA) with the National Farmers Association of Nigeria (NAFAN) in 2004.

the attacks are usually recruited from local communities rather than a mysterious fifth column financed by jihadists from abroad (Kuna & Jibrin, 2016).

The Kanuri of Nigeria and Cameroon and the Mober clan in Niger have also been the target of a great deal of suspicion, because they form the bulk of the Boko Haram combatants (Abani, 2017). There are reports of some individuals seeking to avoid stigmatisation by trying to hide their ethnic identity. Others have rewritten the story of Boko Haram. Many stories circulate, for example, about the founder of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf. He is presented as a Bade from Yobe, rather than a Kanuri, and his mother is said to be from Kelakam in Niger, while his father is supposedly still alive in Maiduguri, where he allegedly settled to escape conflicts with Damagu Fulani in the 1970s. In the same vein, Abubakar Shekau is described not as a Kanuri, but as the son of a Bura from Gashua in Yobe.¹²³

1.4. Conflicts surrounding the forced displacements

In general, the displacements caused by the conflict have exacerbated identity markers. First, the crisis has often shattered multicultural dynamics and encouraged community-based clustering. For example, the highly diverse floating population of Lake Chad was evacuated by military force from the “lowlands”, which they had come to farm when the waters receded and which were called *bariki* in Hausa, in reference to the cosmopolitan nature of the military “barracks” (Krings, 2004). Once in exile, some communities have refused to cohabit in the same space. In refugee and displaced persons “camps”, they have preferred to be grouped on a religious or ethnic basis, often a combination of the two.

In Nigeria, Borno’s rural populations are crammed around Maiduguri in accordance with their LGA of origin. Their treatment is unequal, as evidenced by Fertilizer Camp on the road to Gamburu and Dikwa. In 2016, displaced persons from Jere were able to receive a little food because their local administration was still running. Yet this was not the case of their unfortunate neighbours from the LGAs of Mafa, Dikwa, and Konduga, whose civil servants had dispersed and were therefore no longer in a position to send government relief. Another example concerns the occupants of Malkohi camp in the outer suburbs of Yola: they have grouped together according to religious allegiance, with the Muslims in unfinished schools and the Christians around the church in a nearby village. Some displaced Christians from Adamawa who had moved into the city of Yola were also expelled on suspicion of voting against the Muslims and in favour of outgoing president, Goodluck Jonathan in 2015.

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¹²³ Thus it is argued that he speaks Bura, a language he used in a video in September 2016 to insult the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Yusuf Buratai, himself a Bura from southern Borno.

Along the same lines, Shuwa Arab refugees who fled Nigeria for Cameroon set themselves apart from the Kanuri in makeshift camps between Kousseri and Maroua (Henri, 2014). As for the Christian refugees of Madagali, Gwoza, Pulka, Ngoshe, and Banki, they have gone to Minawaou, the official UNHCR camp, where they make up 90% of the occupants. Meanwhile, old issues have re-emerged among the displaced Muslims of the Mandara Mountains, between the inhabitants of Mora and Kerawa, rival capitals of the Wandala Kingdom. The two populations have refused to pray or share meat together.

Yet the displacements provoked by the conflict have also mixed people along roads and around cities. In most cases, community solidarity prevailed. In Chad, for example, no tensions have been observed in the region of Bol between displaced persons, refugees, and locals despite greater pressure on access to water. Unlike Niger, there have been no reports of conflicts between Buduma and Fulani, possibly due to less Fulani pressure and because the cattle that remained in the lake's pool were stolen rather by Buduma Boko Haram fighters.

To prevent tensions, international aid players have moreover been careful to target recipients based on their vulnerability rather than migrant status. Locals have indeed often been as poor as displaced victims of the conflict. Excluding them from distributions of supplies would have been a source of trouble and was, in any case, inconceivable given the difficulty of differentiating host populations from Nigerian refugees, internally displaced persons, and "returnees" (*i.e.* Chadian, Nigerien, and Cameroonian nationals repatriated to their country of origin).

2. Responses to the crisis

Responses to the crisis have taken two tracks: military and humanitarian. Aside from a few emergency organisations which arrived when Nigeria declared a state of emergency in 2013, international aid players began to be operational in the lakeside countries after an anti-terrorist coalition was put together in 2015. The area then saw massive deployment of relief organisations, particularly in north-east Nigeria, the hardest-hit region in the study area. The influx has been huge, with 120 local, national, and international NGOs in Borno State alone in 2017.

The humanitarian operations deployed in 2016 have disrupted the zone's political economy. The injection of funds and influx of international operators may well have contained the food crisis, but they have also complicated interventions and exacerbated corruption. Furthermore, diversion of relief is not the only challenge facing the aid players. There is a crying lack of political vision and coordination at regional level, when the zone's general state of structural under-development should make for crisis responses conceived in terms of construction rather than reconstruction.

2.1. The emergence of a humanitarian system

International aid has not been deployed in the same way in the zone's four countries. In Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, donors have funded emergency actions and promoted employment-intensive projects. With the support of the EU Emergency Trust Fund, the French Agency for Development (AFD) has targeted youth employment. In Cameroon, for example, the aim is to “employ marginalised populations—young people and women—on essential projects (digging wells and laying rural roads). They receive one-third of their wages paid into a savings account in a micro-finance establishment so that they can rebuild part of the capital they have lost during the crisis”.¹²⁴

Nigeria, not used to receiving development aid, has taken a different path from Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. The country has comparatively few local and international NGOs (Pérouse de Montclos, 2005). Since the Nigerian Civil War, which saw the birth of the humanitarian concept of intervention in 1968, Nigeria has been wary of relief organisations as potential violators of its national sovereignty. It basically sees itself as a regional leader, a demographic giant and the leading economic and oil power in Africa. It does not take kindly to the idea of depending on foreign aid. The highly nationalistic President Muhammadu Buhari himself refused to sign a structural adjustment agreement with the World Bank when he was in office at the head of a military junta in 1984. More than in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, relief players have had to come to terms with local institutions such as the NEMA at federal level and the SEMAs in each state.

Today, gatekeepers are blocking aid at all levels, from customs for imports of humanitarian equipment to immigration services for visas and the army for authorisations to circulate from one state or LGA to another (e.g. to the port of Baga Kawa, whose road was officially reopened in 2017). In addition, international NGOs have been severely criticised and sometimes accused of supporting the insurgents and having an interest in the conflict's perpetuation to secure contracts. In Maiduguri, the authorities have complained that distributions of free foodstuffs competed with local agriculture, created a syndrome of dependence, and dissuaded displaced persons from returning home despite the overcrowding in the city. They also regretted that local civil servants, especially health workers, were tempted to leave their jobs to go and work for international NGOs where they are much better paid. In August 2017, displaced persons at Gubio Camp attacked the staff of an NGO, International Medical Corps, accusing it of disrespecting local traditions and not employing enough locals. The incident forced the World Food Programme to temporarily suspend its food distributions.

Although the challenges to humanitarian aid seem to be less severe in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, the four lakeside countries also share the same concern to

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¹²⁴ <https://cm.ambafrance.org/La-France-et-le-Cameroun-en-premiere-ligne-pour-appuyer-le-redressement-local>

combine security with development. Their comprehensive, integrated approach to reconstruction does not necessarily imply more regional coordination. Yet the priority is very clearly placed on anti-terrorist and military imperatives, even if economic sanctions against Boko Haram impede resilience by closing borders, banning fishing, and stopping agricultural production along the Yobe River. In Cameroon, for example, an order of 21 April 2015 created an Ad-Hoc Inter-ministerial Committee of Donations for the Populations and the Defence Forces. Chaired by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, the committee is to identify needs and supervise food distributions in close liaison with the military hierarchy. In other words, it is mandated to coordinate national and international humanitarian aid under the supervision of the defence forces. It gives priority to the military, and civilians are supposed to benefit only from 40% of the funds collected.¹²⁵

Similar rationales are found in Nigeria. Contrary to countries such as Colombia, which chose to promote peace and reconciliation by helping victims of all sides, the Victims Support Fund (VSF) is not intended to compensate for government abuses. Its official title, the Nigeria Foundation for the Victims of Terrorism, clearly says so. Instead, the VSF sponsors infrastructures for the security forces. In May 2016, it started building a police station to protect 72,000 displaced persons to whom it had provided shelters in Dikwa. It also undertook to support military hospitals at Dalori I Camp and the 7th Division's barracks in Maiduguri.¹²⁶ These initiatives are supposed to complement the subsidies of some 20 million naira each that it has distributed to civilian hospitals to finance their maternity wards and attend births free of charge, with two establishments in Maiduguri, two in Yola, two in Gombe, two in Wukari, one in Damaturu, one in Abuja, two in Kano, and two in Jos.

In general, security imperatives and political considerations largely condition the deployment of aid and the identification of needs. Since the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the authorities have indeed sought to prove the success of their peacemaking enterprise on the basis that it expedites the return of refugees and the resettlement of internally displaced persons in their original LGAs. Sometimes conducted by military force and in violation of international humanitarian law, as in the case of the expulsions from Cameroon, these operations consist in Nigeria of closing camps, stopping distributions of food, and evicting squatters—for example, evacuating Maiduguri's schools occupied by conflict victims and due to be renovated by the British Safe School project. In April 2017, for instance, the Governor of Borno ordered the occupants of the Nursing Village site to be transferred to the outskirts of Dalori II in the Maiduguri suburbs. At the beginning of the year, he also announced the closure of all the

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¹²⁵ See statements by the Minister of Territorial Administration, René Emmanuel Sadi, in April 2016. <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-effort-de-guerre-ce-que-fera-le-gouvernement-des-25-milliards-de-f-260229.html>

¹²⁶ Interviews with VSF officials in Abuja in May 2016.

camps in the region, before backtracking in May 2017 because his decision was impossible to enforce without planning. In most cases, the authorities had nothing arranged to resettle displaced persons and eviction fed suspicions of land speculation more than anything.

2.2. Aid diversion practices

International aid is effectively seen as a new rent to replace oil money when barrel prices drop, particularly in lakeside regions that produce little or no commodities. Admittedly, governments are not the only guilty parties in this regard. Victims of the conflict have sold aid on the black market when it did not meet their needs. And insurgents have attacked and ransacked displaced persons camps just after food distributions have been made, as in Bosso in Niger. The Boko Haram combatants particularly need these provisions because they are not self-sufficient and receive no funding from jihadist groups abroad. Unlike Somalia's al-Shabaab, they have therefore not sought to drive away the aid agencies by kidnapping humanitarian workers for ransom. In 2016 and 2017, there were reports of just three serious attacks on food convoys, all of them in Nigeria. One was essentially a food grab, in Jere in the greater Maiduguri area in December 2017. The other two targeted rather the food convoys' military escorts, regardless of speeches from the leader of the faction that pledged allegiance to Islamic State, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, about alleged attempts by Christian NGOs to convert Muslim children.¹²⁷

Actually, government authorities were the main parties accused of diverting international aid in the four lakeside countries. In Cameroon, for example, suspicion has fallen on the emergency plan announced in 2015 to build schools and hospitals in the Far North. According to eyewitnesses, the schools and infrastructures supposed to accommodate displaced persons have never been finished, while the displaced persons themselves remained in makeshift shelters.¹²⁸ In Nigeria in June 2017, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo officially acknowledged that 50% of food aid did not reach the victims.¹²⁹ The Senate consequently launched an investigation into corruption, lack of transparency, and fraudulent contracts on the committee in charge of reconstructing the North East, the PCNI, focusing on the disappearance of 2.5 billion naira and the alleged renovation of Yobe schools left in ruins.¹³⁰ In 2017, Borno State House of Assembly members

127 See his interview in August 2016 in *Al-Naba*, one of the Islamic State's propaganda magazines.

128 Interview by Charline Rangé with a security manager for an international organisation, Maroua, May 2017.

129 BBC (19 June 2017), "Half Nigeria Food Aid for Boko Haram Victims not Delivered". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40325043>

130 This sum was confirmed by a report from the UNDP and the National Human Rights Commission in November 2017. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/217352-presidential-committee-rebuild-north-east-unable-account-n2-5-billion.html>
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/diversion-idp-funds-undp-nhrc-report-indicts-presidency-ex-sgf/>

also launched an investigation into the embezzlement of funds intended for conflict victims. In Maiduguri, displaced persons themselves demonstrated in the streets and blocked some roads in protest at the authorities' greed. For the time being, however, only a few stooges have been arrested for taking sacks of rice.¹³¹ In 2016, a Borno SEMA director was dismissed for complaining that he had not received the volumes of aid he had been promised.¹³²

In practice, aid diversion has not stopped. It is very difficult to put an end to a system involving senior officials. Humanitarian workers and local traders do not speak openly about it for fear of losing their contracts. Displaced persons are also wary of discussing it as they are afraid of reprisals, such as being accused of being Boko Haram accomplices.¹³³ The possibilities for independent oversight are especially slim in Nigeria where the sites that host IDPs are under army, NEMA, and SEMA supervision—especially the camps of southern Borno, apparently the most militarised in the region in 2017. In practice, the authorities try to get their hands on foreign aid and retain control over food distributions by preventing surprise inspections. Most of the time, the humanitarian agencies and international financial institutions can do no more than check compliance with procedures based on lists of “recipients” drawn up by local officials, which have been deliberately inflated and contain many duplicates due to naming practices in Kanuri country.¹³⁴ Efforts to rectify the situation are not helped by the fact that there is no coordination or centralisation of data. The United States, for example, has supported development projects led by officials involved in financial scandals.¹³⁵

Yet Nigeria is known for its high levels of corruption. Its past record should cause players to tread particularly carefully. Corruption has ruined agricultural development projects launched since independence, such as Operation Feed the Nation in 1976, sarcastically redubbed Operation Fool the Nation, and the South Chad Irrigation Project, sunk by lack of maintenance, among other things.¹³⁶

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¹³¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-idUSKBN1802K1>

¹³² Interviews in Maiduguri, May 2016.

¹³³ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/sep/13/nigerians-facing-desperate-hunger-accuse-officials-of-stealing-food-un-brink-famine>
<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/feature/borno-idp-camps-rising-hunger-as-officials-divert-food/155675.html>

¹³⁴ Children are often named in honour of prominent figures. Humanitarian organisations should seek to overcome this name duplication by more accurately identifying recipients based on both the father and mother's names.

¹³⁵ In 2014, USAID inaugurated the Miya rice-growing project in Makurdi, Benue State. Miya was owned by former justice minister Michael Aondoakaa, accused of corruption and barred from entering the United States since 2010.

¹³⁶ The project, which planned to irrigate 67,000 ha of land claimed from the receding waters, managed to develop just 10,227 ha of paddy and wheat fields in 1983, its best year, before collapsing in 1993 and leaving local farmers to go back to their subsistence farming, growing sorghum. Meanwhile, the Baga Kawa polders never came to anything (Bertoncin & Pase, 2012).

The Green Revolution, financed by the 1970s oil boom under the Fourth National Development Plan, was to promote smallholder producers, streamline semi-public corporations, and encourage partnerships with the private sector by allowing foreign investors to own up to 60% of a joint venture. Yet it went ahead without first consulting the farmers, had little impact on the poor and, more importantly, benefited the ruling military's cronies, who took advantage to acquire tracts of land by expropriation (ActionAid, 2015). In Kano State, a study showed that members of the aristocracy (*sarauta*) diverted as much as 20% of the agricultural inputs earmarked for development programmes (Matlon, 1981).

These problems have concerned more than just the north of Nigeria. In the south, development assistance programmes have also seen nepotism in job assignment, embezzlement of funds, overcharged contracts, underpaying local staff, and a per diem culture that did not make projects sustainable when the funding stopped.¹³⁷ Neither did the return of civilian rule in 1999 put an end to the corruption. Embezzlement continued to eat into welfare and development aid. For example, the YouWiN (Youth Enterprise With Innovation) programme set up by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 to support employment for young people and women benefited the spouses, children, and friends of the programme's senior officials, who were investigated by a Ministry of Finance internal probe in 2017.¹³⁸

North-east Nigeria's particularities have more to do with the declaration of an emergency rule and a humanitarian crisis, which have opened the way to many fraudulent practices because they circumvented the 2007 Public Procurement Act procedures on account of the latter being too slow. Following the 2017 Oslo Humanitarian Conference, donor pressure for prompt disbursement has also played a role, resulting in diversions of aid that have perpetuated malnutrition. This also explains why only a small proportion of the displaced persons in Nigeria, possibly 10%, have agreed (or have been forced) to go and live in official camps that are poorly supplied, as shown by a Doctors Without Borders (MSF) survey in Bama in 2016.

In this context, it is worth detailing the different aid diversion techniques. Sale of humanitarian supplies on the black market and racketeering of displaced persons are different from petty corruption by low-ranking officials who "incite" relief organisations to pay kickbacks to release merchandise held up in customs, or renew short-stay visas to make expatriates pay to extend the length of their stay. Regarding trafficking, it concerns as much medicinal drugs as food aid. In Maiduguri in 2017, diversion forced displaced persons in UNICEF camps to turn

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137 On AIDS programmes and the development of the Niger Delta, see for instance Smith (2003: 703–715) and Pérouse de Montclos (2012: 113–130). For an equivalent example in forest conservation in Senegal, see Blundo (2011: 427–452).

138 <http://punchng.com/probe-uncovers-massive-fraud-in-youwin-programme/>

to the less-pilfered MSF clinic. In terms of food aid, witnesses report that three in four truckloads, sometimes nine in ten, are sold on the black market. What has become systematic theft has given rise to the development of a repacking industry to sell the merchandise more discreetly. The army is said to be involved and is suspected by the population of artificially maintaining curfews so that its convoys can travel by night under cover to transport stolen food from IDP camps or Boko Haram livestock to other regions of Nigeria.

The capture of the humanitarian rent is also practised by bogus local NGOs, which have proliferated in a region with very few associations, unlike Christian missions in Chad.¹³⁹ The collapse of the local currency has also provided an opportunity to manipulate exchange rates by forcing humanitarian institutions to buy the naira at the official rate of 1 US dollar for 199 naira instead of the 250 to 340 naira on the black market in 2015. This differential represented an average loss of some 68 million US dollars, judging from the sums engaged in Nigeria that year by the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and MSF.¹⁴⁰

However, the overcharging of fraudulent contracts remains the “best” way of diverting government and international aid resources. The conflicts of interest are sometimes patent. A federal government secretary, Babachir David Lawan, was suspended in May 2017 and then dismissed for awarding PINE contracts to his own companies in Borno, Yobe and his home state of Adamawa to assist displaced persons. In Borno, the race for contracts has also influenced aid modalities. The construction of new houses prevails over direct funding to displaced persons to help them rebuild their home. These housing estates are highly visible and satisfy the donors, especially in Kanuriland towards Beni Sheikh, on the main road from Maiduguri to Damaturu. Yet they do not conform to traditional housing, with its separate compound for women. They could therefore well remain empty, or be allocated to those with the right connections to politicians.

The North East Development Commission (NEDC), set up by the government in Abuja, also resembles a contract machine more than anything else. Its equivalent in the south, the NDDC (Niger Delta Development Commission) established in 2000, was already renowned for its inefficiency and slated by local activists as mere “window dressing”.¹⁴¹ The NEDC is supposed to be funded by the

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¹³⁹ <http://ngowatchdog.org/alert-40-fake-ngos-exploiting-idps-borno/>

¹⁴⁰ Humanitarian aid channelling through the UN agencies totalled USD 135 million in 2015, instead of the USD 150 million requested, and the ICRC and MSF operating budgets came to around USD 15 and 30 million respectively.

¹⁴¹ In 2003, the NDDC claimed that 190 of its 783 projects were operational. Yet an independent evaluation showed that it had completed only 100 of the 358 contracts awarded to local businesses (Omeje, 2006: 151, 162); Interview by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos with one of the leaders of the insurgency, Asari Dokubo, in Warri, in 2011.

disbursement of 50% of the sums earmarked for the North East by the National Ecological Fund, in addition to 15% of federal transfers to the zone's six member states and 3% of the annual budget of any extracting company operating in the region. Unlike the oil-producing Niger Delta, the NEDC cannot count on the support of the extractive industry, as multinationals have not moved into the region. It could therefore remain an empty shell, without any real assets.

2.3. Aid-to-development linkage problems

The difficulties encountered in the four lakeside countries are not all specific to the region. Aside from aid diversion, they are recurrent in many crises and concern problems already identified by researchers: failure to adapt the response; contradictions between different projects; duplication of efforts; inequalities of access to international organisations' resources; and absence of coordination, both between states and between players with different intervention capacities and norms (ministries, donors and NGOs).

In Cameroon, in the department of Logone-et-Chari, some criticise initiatives disconnected from the realities on the ground: distributions of chicks that died soon afterward because epidemics were not considered; establishment of a herders' cooperative that does not satisfy local needs; an outreach project to promote schooling for girls when there were no schools or teachers; construction of a causeway that could penalise the farmers (see Box 13); and so on. The Three-Year Emergency Plan to Accelerate Economic Growth, moreover, provided for an agricultural scheme to be developed in Zina, in the heart of a wetland protected in principle by the LCBC Water Charter.¹⁴² And no one knows how the projects to develop fish farming on the plains of the Logone River and black-eyed pea and maize agriculture at the lake could operate along with oil exploration campaigns in the Makary area and between Waza and Logone Birni.

Coordination problems run just as deep at national level in each country. In principle, specialised agencies are supposed to coordinate relief with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), an inter-ministerial committee in Cameroon, and, in Nigeria, a Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative (PCNI), which claims to supervise the National Humanitarian Coordination Forum (NHCF), the VSF, PINE, and the Safe School Initiative (SSI). A new commission, the NEDC, is also tasked with sustaining and legalising all the initiatives on the Nigerian side.

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¹⁴² Interview by Charline Rangé with the managers of the Cameroonian Association for Environmental Education (ACEEN), in Maroua, June 2017.

Box 13

**Limitations of top-down planning:
example of the Logone causeway in Cameroon**

“The engineering firm that did that knows nothing about wetland plains. There are two ways of looking at flooding: for the government, flooding is a problem, whereas it creates wealth for the farmers. They know the flooding calendar well and adjust to it. But the decisions come from above. The farmers say, ‘They’ll build their causeway over our dead bodies.’ The project was set up before putting any thought into the problems to be solved. Several options need to be considered and several options discussed. The causeway is just one option. There are others. You have to leave the door open and not impose a project. Most of the projects are political brainchildren. The technicians have to follow suit even when the investment is ‘highly regrettable’.”

Source: Interview with the managers of ACEEN, Maroua, June 2017.

In practice, the governments of the four lakeside countries exhibit no real will to coordinate their efforts at regional level. In Nigeria, in particular, the problems are magnified by the sheer size of the country, its administrative complexity, central government dysfunctions, wariness of Western humanitarians, and the usual rivalries for power in a federal structure (see Box 14). In Borno, Governor Kashim Shettima set up a State Relief Committee supposed to oversee assistance to displaced persons ... and used to bring back into the political game some high-profile figures brushed aside by his predecessor Ali Modu Sheriff.¹⁴³ In September 2015, he also created a Ministry for Reconstruction, whose responsibilities overlapped with those of the NEDC and his ministries of Health, Public Works and Housing. In the neighbouring State of Yobe, a similar initiative was prevented mainly by a lack of funds and federal support.¹⁴⁴ The multilayered administrative strata could therefore complicate reconstruction and development efforts. Of the four lakeside countries, Nigeria is clearly the nation where it will be most difficult to negotiate an extension to the presence of the international aid players.

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¹⁴³ Bulama Mali Gubio was made chair of this committee.

¹⁴⁴ Interview by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos with the governor of Yobe in Abuja, 14 May 2016.

Box 14

Public action coordination problems in Nigeria

Problems of coordination are amplified tenfold by Nigeria's sheer size and administrative complexity. There are challenges at all levels. On the side of the donors, for instance, conflicts between the federal Ministry for Education and Bauchi State put an end in 2013 to a UNICEF and World Bank project to promote education for girls in secondary schools. At federal level, competition between the Ministry for Agriculture and hydraulic resources departments also paralysed the bodies managing the Yobe River and Lake Chad, respectively the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin Development Authority (HJRBDA) in Kano and the Chad Basin Development Authority (CBDA) in Maiduguri. More fundamentally, the Nigerian government's "three-tier" structure continues to create clashes of jurisdiction between central government in Abuja, federated states, and LGAs.

Alongside the reforms conducted in 1976, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 2003, the constitutions of 1979, 1989, and 1999 assigned LGAs to managing primary schools, maintaining primary healthcare, and developing agricultural and natural resources, with the exception of mineral resources. Yet LGAs do not have the financial means to carry out their tasks and generally have to turn to the states, which monopolise their budgets. The education sector speaks volumes about these coordination problems. Whereas the secondary and higher education sectors are managed jointly by Abuja and the states, primary schools are financed 25% by the LGAs, 18% by the federal government, 13% by the states, 40% by the pupils' parents, 3% by a national commission (Universal Basic Education Commission), and 1% by development aid donors (Bollag, 2015).

2.4. Long-term structural challenges

In the longer term, the challenges awaiting reconstruction will probably extend beyond aid diversion and coordination problems. Steps will need to be taken, first of all, to restore a social contract, as the population has generally lost confidence in the government's capacities to take affirmative public action. Something also needs to be done to improve the appalling image of these regions, which were already seen as backward, if not "primitive", nationwide before the crisis. Historically, such perceptions explain difficulties in deploying skilled personnel in the zone, a point that clearly shows the need to develop training for civil servants recruited and assigned locally.

For the moment, however, governments of the four countries carefully avoid dealing with problems of governance, corruption, and security force abuses, which in turn have inflamed the Boko Haram conflict. Without a political vision, their initiatives look more like a shopping list of development projects with the usual specifications for education, health, employment, intensive agriculture,

housing, transport, and access to water and electricity. The focus of the NEDC on infrastructure is fairly typical in this respect. Top of its agenda is capturing part of Nigeria's rent in an imitation of the populations of the oil-producing Niger Delta, who secured a federal ministry dedicated to their region in 2008 and a social package for their militants demobilised under an amnesty granted in 2009. The same holds true for the North East States Transformation Strategy (NESTS) set up by the area's governors following economic summits in Bauchi in 2012 and then in Gombe in 2013. Taking its cue from a South West governors' economic forum in 2011, NESTS called for a Marshall Plan and the creation of a federal ministry dedicated to the region. Yet the many projects that it was supposed to support and evaluate ultimately never got off the drawing board (NESTS, 2014).

The donors' focus on countering terrorism and illegal emigration to Europe also tends to overshadow the area's other destabilising factors. Boko Haram is definitely not the only source of insecurity, in that violence is also fuelled by agro-pastoral conflicts, community clashes, political tensions, and repeated violations of human rights, not to mention the high frequency of fatal road accidents totally ignored by aid players. Exogenous factors have also contributed to exacerbating the crisis, such as when the collapse in oil prices shrunk the oil rent and reduced the governments' capacity to pay the civil servants of Borno, Yobe, and N'Djaména.

Last but not least, the challenge for national and international operators concerns construction, and not simply reconstruction. The entire zone was already highly vulnerable even before the first clashes with the Nigerian Taliban in 2003 and then with Boko Haram in 2009. In rural areas, in particular, basic public services were not running. Rural primary schools and health clinics were often empty. This is especially true of Nigeria, where access to education and healthcare was among the lowest in the country, alongside the North West zone.

Today, the scale of the task is huge and calls for a long-term approach to the region's (re)construction. Depending on how the situation evolves, policymakers will have to make choices, which we will examine in the next two chapters. The options will concern first and foremost whether to reaffirm central government authority with top-down public policies or with more open, democratic forms of governance. There is also the question of whether or not to opt for neo-liberal models, which could, for example, foster the expansion of agro-industries driven by large-scale land purchases in high-potential areas, at the expense of more socially inclusive family farming systems.

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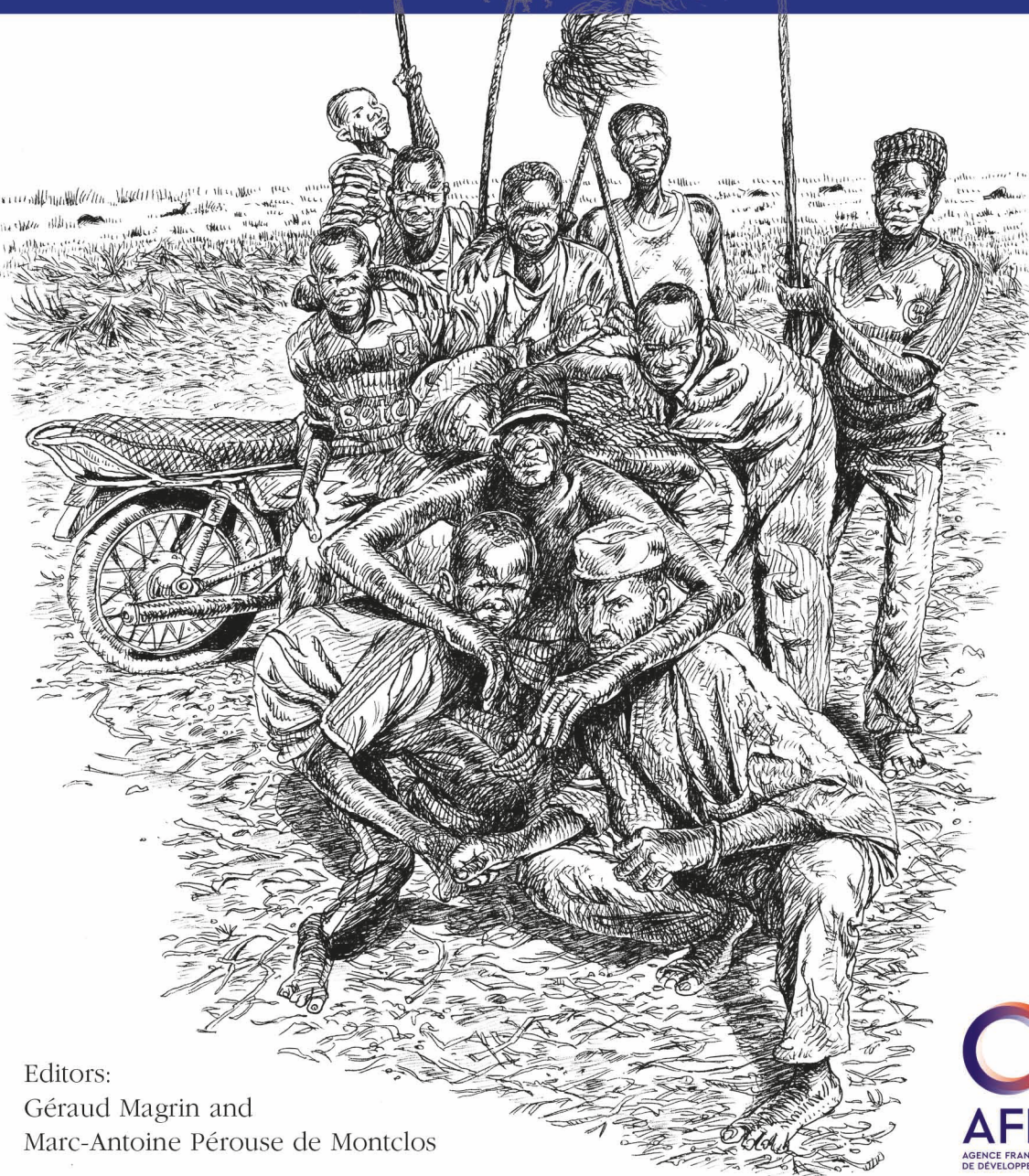
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Foreword

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.