
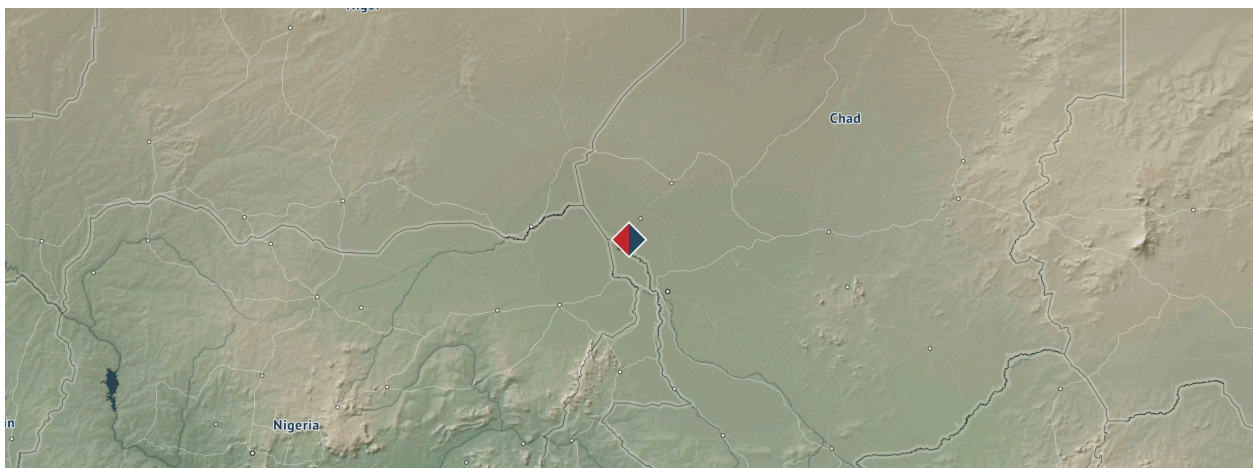




Conflict Factsheet

Type of conflict Main	Intensity 3 
Conflict Locality Africa	Time 1980– 2004
Countries Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon	Resources Water, Resilience of the environment



Livelihood
insecurity
and migration



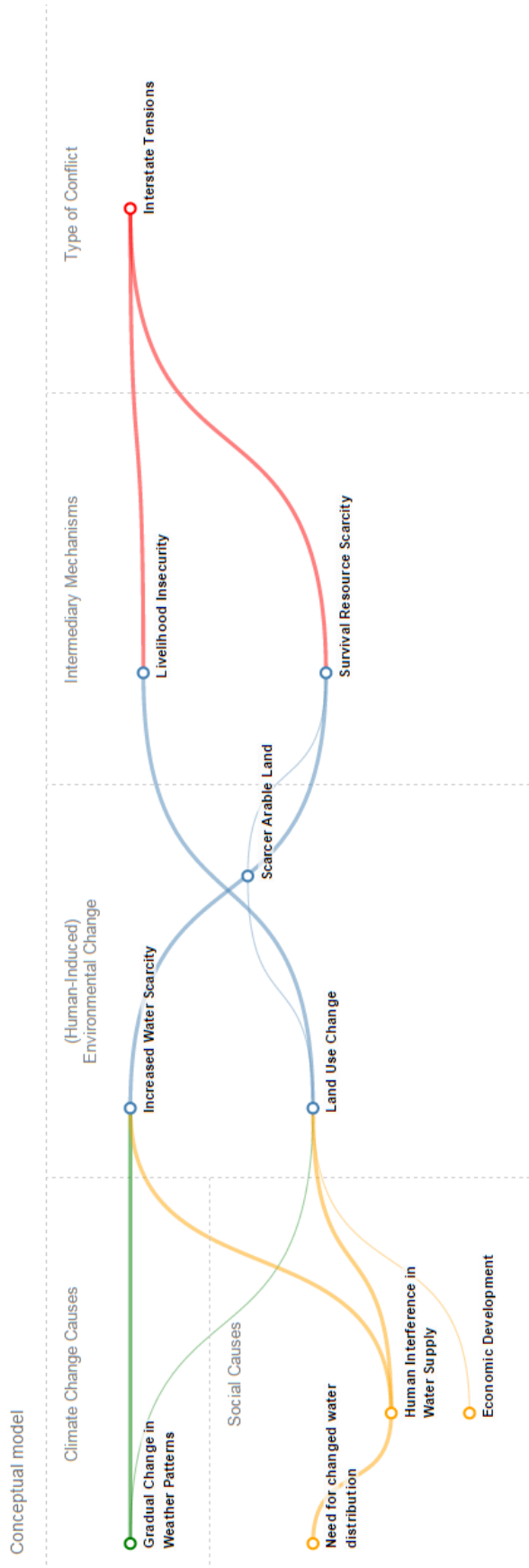
Sea-level rise
and coastal
degradation

Conflict Summary

Between 1963 and the present day, the surface water of Lake Chad has shrunk by 50%. In the context of increasing environmental change, long-term stability requires the cooperation of the co-riparians to elaborate sustainable strategies to manage the basin region.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Water, Resilience of the environment

Water-stressed Area

Low Level of Economic Development



Conflict History

Lake Chad - which straddles Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria - is one of the largest lakes in Africa, as well as a vital ecosystem for approximately 35 million people living around its basin. The combination of large irrigation projects and environmental change has been responsible for the depletion of the lake, which has shrunk by 50% compared to its 1963 level ([Hendrix, 2014](#)). As the lake started to recess, the four riparian states formed the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in 1964 in order to manage the lake's waters effectively and foster cooperation at the regional level. However, despite the cooperative steps taken by the co-riparian states, the LCBC's weak institutional mechanisms were not able to prevent the member states from pursuing unilateral projects in the lake region. These unilateral initiatives led to tensions which escalated to conflicts at several occasions. Today, violent inter-state conflicts have been settled due to external bodies and the co-riparians collaborate on several restoration projects with the support of a number of international organisations. Nevertheless, despite these projects, weaknesses in the LCBC institutions remain and tensions still persist between the member states.

Recession of Lake Chad and Inter-state Cooperation

In 1964, as a response to the signs of recess of the Lake Chad Basin, the four riparian states of the lake created the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) ([FES, 2011](#)). This was seen as a highly cooperative event ([Oregon State University, 2011](#)), which demonstrated the awareness of the co-riparian states to address the ecological challenges of the basin ([Bächler and Spillmann, 1996](#)). Several mechanisms were put in place to ensure effective management of the lake, including the obligation of member states to inform the commission prior to conducting projects (*Ibid.*). Throughout the 1970s, further instruments were created to strengthen the institutions of the LCBC ([FES, 2011](#)).

Despite this, the LCBC's institutions have remained weak (*Ibid.*). The absence of international monitoring and sanctioning bodies ([Odada et al., 2006](#)) as well as the loopholes in the agreement amongst the co-riparian states ([Bächler and Spillmann, 1996](#)) have deprived the Commission of any power to enforce the LCBC's mechanisms. Moreover, the member states never reached any agreement on water-allocation (*Ibid.*) nor did they harmonize their national water policies ([Metz, 2007](#)).

After the region was hit by droughts in 1972, the co-riparian states initiated national hydrological projects to be able to cope with possible renewed droughts in the future ([Bächler and Spillmann, 1996](#)). However, the member states did not comply with the obligation to inform the LCBC beforehand. Nigeria initiated the South Chad Irrigation Project in 1973; Cameroon constructed dams on the Chari-Logone river – main tributary to the Lake – “in obvious violation of the treaty provisions”(*Ibid.*) whilst Niger constructed dams on the bank of the Komadougou-Yobe river, upstream of Nigeria's irrigation structures ([Odada et al., 2006](#)). At the beginning of these projects, the water diversion was minimal ([Bila et al., 2014](#)). However, the level of water diverted started increasing between the years 1982-1985 (*Ibid.*). Between 1983 and 1994, the volume of water diverted accounted for 50% of the lake decrease ([Metz, 2007](#)).

Emergence of inter-state disputes

As the co-riparians increasingly diverted the lake's waters, several inter-conflicts and intra-state conflicts over water, fish and land started erupting in the 1980s and the 1990s ([Bila et al., 2014](#)). The most salient inter-state disputes which happened during this period are the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria



over the Bakassi Peninsula – which was settled by the International Court Justice – and the conflict that opposed Nigeria and Chad over the status of islands, which had emerged as a consequence of the lake's recession, which caused 84 fatalities ([Ibid.](#)).

Unilateral water projects worsened the environmental situation

Moreover, by erecting improperly-designed dams and reservoirs and conducting uncoordinated operations – as pursuit of their national interest –, the riparian states have aggravated the consequences of increased droughts and decreasing rain falls on Lake depletion ([Odada et al., 2006](#); [Onuoha, 2010](#)). As a consequence, the basin's natural resources have become increasingly scarce for the communities, who are highly dependent on these resources for their livelihood ([Onuoha, 2010](#)). This led to competition and conflicts over land and water, which have not been solved today (see [Lake Chad - Local Conflicts over Livelihood and Survival Resources](#)).

Today, the violent conflicts, which erupted in the 1980s as a consequence of the failed cooperation attempts amongst member states have ceased. Although there are still tensions amongst member states and weaknesses in the LCBC persist, the 2000s have been characterised by more cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Resolution Efforts

Restoration of Stability

As of today, the violent disputes amongst the co-riparian states have been settled with the support of international bodies, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case of the conflict over the Bakassi peninsula ([ICE, 2005](#)). The Nigerian troops left the peninsula in 2004, ending the last conflict of the lake region ([Ibid.](#)). Even though tensions between states have not disappeared – for instance Nigeria still contests the decision of the ICJ today ([Metz, 2007](#)) –, the many organisations involved in restoration projects of Lake Chad – such as UNEP, WWF, FAO and the World Bank – have been key to achieve stability between the co-riparian states and to conduct restoration projects in the basin ([Asah, 2015](#)). This international support coupled with the awareness of the need for urgent action to address the lake's degradation have led to more cooperative behaviour between the co-riparian states since the 2000s ([Odada et al., 2006](#); [FES, 2011](#)).

Awareness of co-riparians of necessity to take measures

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the awareness of Lake Chad degradation and of the urgent need to conduct restoration processes have led the co-riparian states and the CLCB to engage in a number of management initiatives with the support of a number of international organisations ([Odada et al., 2006](#); [Onuoha, 2010](#)). These include a major project to transfer the waters of the Congo basin (Oubangui) to Lake Chad in order to replenish the lake ([Onuoha, 2010](#)) and a sustainable development programme for Lake Chad, which was launched in 2009 ([FES, 2011](#)). Moreover, the frequent meetings amongst the LCBC basin members ([Ibid.](#)) and the improved commitment of the latter to their financial obligations towards the Commission are evidence that the co-riparian states' political will to cooperate has greatly improved since the 2000s ([Odada et al., 2006](#)).

Factors hindering the implementation of restoration projects



Nevertheless, despite these cooperative events, reports have pointed out that the Commission's member states have failed to implement several projects initiated by the LCBC and supported by international organisations (Metz, 2007). In 2011, an analysis conducted to assess the progress of the sustainable-development programme for Lake Chad pointed out that only 15% of the programme activities were implemented by the member states (FES, 2011). Although this could be interpreted as smoke-screen actions from the riparian-states, it must be pointed out that several outstanding factors are still hindering the implementation of the restoration projects.

First, the lack of personnel and experts at the national and regional level plays a great deal in this incapacity to implement the initiatives (Ibid.). Second, the international agencies often fail to give leadership to the regional institutions in their project and direct those remotely. This has led to delays in implementing initiatives, as it was the case for Lake Chad GEF PDF-B project (Odada et al., 2006). Originally planned to last eight months, the implementing agencies –World Bank, UNDP and UNEP– took three years to develop a report (Ibid.). Finally, the increasing threat of Boko Haram in the region is a major factor which is currently hindering the technical implementation of projects, such as the Oubangui transfer project (Galy, 2014). The presence of the group makes it impossible to safely send technicians and experts on the ground (Ibid.).

Institutional loopholes of the Lake Chad Basin Commission

However, even though those restoration projects would enable to replenish the lake to some extent, those are not sufficient to ensure stability in the long-term. In fact, to ensure continuous sustainable cooperation and stability between the member states, the political and institutional loopholes of the LCBC must be addressed. Scholars, therefore, point out the necessity for the member states to harmonise their water policies (Metz, 2007) and to agree on clear water allocation rules amongst the co-riparians (Odada et al., 2006). The FAO is currently assisting the LCBC in studying water- allocation options (Ibid.) Furthermore, creating monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms, thereby making agreements binding, is critical to guarantee that member states will comply to the rules set by the Commission (Ibid.). In fact, so far agreements amongst the co-riparian states have only been voluntary, which has led to a number of failed agreements (Ibid.) Last but not least, it is critical to empower the LCBC to settle conflicts – The LCBC was unable to settle the conflict over the Bakassi Peninsula for instance –, in case conflicts would again amongst member states. This is critical as tensions amongst member states have not disappeared.

Other context factors as possible source of interstate tensions

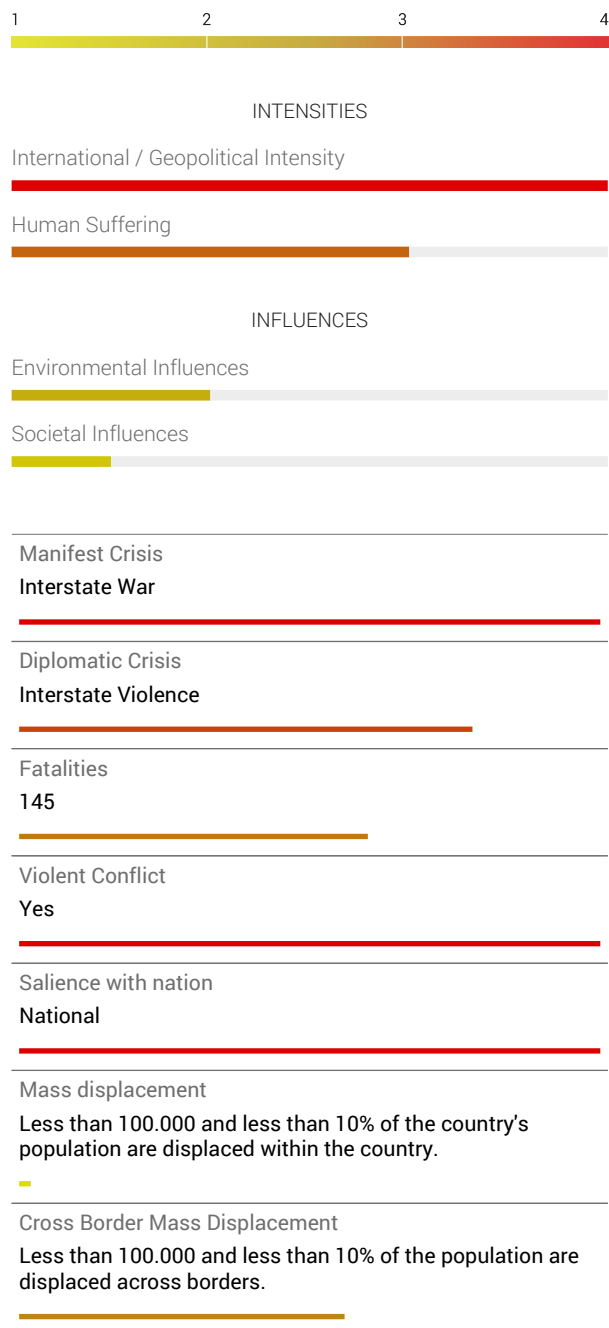
Several factors such as the presence of Boko Haram on Lake Chad basin are source of tensions amongst the co-riparians (Asah, 2015). As climate change continues to erode the lake despite the restoration projects conducted, more tensions could lead to conflicts if these loopholes are not addressed and if water is not shared equally amongst member states (Ibid.).

To conclude, it is clear that restoration projects must be combined by institutional changes at the level of the LCBC. Even though some mechanisms are still lacking, such as monitoring and sanctioning instruments, the Commission has taken action to remedy to the lack of clear water allocation rules amongst member states. Whilst the lack of clear water allocation rules has been pointed out as being a major gap in the LCBC Convention, the LCBC requested the FAO to support the Commission in studying water-allocation regulations and the report is yet to be completed. This is therefore an important step which could strengthen cooperation. However, it is important that new water regulations take into account



the impacts of climate change on the lake and the variability of water this induces. Furthermore, the high number of international organisations involved in projects in the Lake Chad Basin continues to play a major role in fostering sustainable water management amongst the co-riparians.

Intensities & Influences



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence has ceded completely.

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been partially addressed.

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Conflict resolution strategies have been clearly responsible for the decrease in conflict intensity.



Conflict Resolution Strategies

INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE CONFLICT

Increased coordination

The strategy is an important part of the conflict resolution process

2

Reduction in conflict potential of scarcity through better management institutions

The strategy is present, but only attempted weakly

1

REDUCING FRAGILITY AND INCREASING RESILIENCE

Greater Institutional Inclusiveness

Applicable, but not employed

0

State Capacity Improvement

The strategy is present, but only attempted weakly

1

ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

Reduction in scarcity through (adoption of) technological innovation

The strategy is an important part of the conflict resolution process

2

Shift of livelihood bases

Applicable, but not employed

0

Restoration/Protection of environmental livelihood base

The strategy is an important part of the conflict resolution process

2

THIRD PARTY TOOLS

External Support for Capacity Building

The strategy is an important part of the conflict resolution process

2

Peacekeeping / Stabilization

The strategy is an important part of the conflict resolution process

2



CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS OR NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

An adverse environmental change leads to more cooperation between stakeholders

Primary conflict resolution strategy

3

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Lake Chad, Africa - Local Conflicts over Survival Resources](#)

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Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/lake-chad-africa-inter-state-conflicts-and-cooperation>