

Concept Note

Side Event on Responding to Crisis in the Lake Chad Region: Partnerships For Resilient Livelihoods

Wednesday 21 February 2018

Background and justification

Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has spilled over into neighbouring countries in the Lake Chad Basin – especially Cameroon, Chad and the Niger – with devastating effects on food security and livelihoods. Millions have been displaced from their homes and their access to agricultural lands and assets has been hampered, creating massive humanitarian needs in an area already characterized by food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation.

The scale of the crisis' impact on food security and livelihoods requires a regional approach, in coordination with all stakeholders, in order to strengthen the resilience of the affected populations and produce visible quick wins.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with other United Nations (UN) and development agencies has been working to provide assistance to thousands of vulnerable households affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. This side event will present the current issues and challenges for the effective impact of humanitarian responses in the Lake Chad region and put forward recommendations to strengthen partnerships with the aim to build resilient livelihoods for the affected communities.

Conflict and insecurity are not the sole cause of this crisis, which has been determined by a complex, interrelated socio-economic and ecological set of issues affecting rural and urban livelihoods in the Lake Chad Basin. Population growth, harsh competition over natural and economic resources, lack of basic social services and income opportunities, the marginalization of vulnerable groups, negative coping strategies and social divisions based on livelihood, ethnic or religious lines as well as governance issues, have been identified as the main underlying factors of the crisis. The environment in the area is extremely vulnerable, and variables such as climate change, unpredictable rainfall and water intake due to population pressure or pollution have an impact on the Lake Chad.

Around 17 million people live in the crisis-affected areas across the four Lake Chad Basin countries. Nearly 2.5 million people have been displaced either internally or across international borders – becoming refugees – making this one of the largest displacement crises in the world and the most rapidly growing one. In July 2017, some 7.2 million people were food insecure at crisis and emergency levels, with over 500 000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for most of the area's rural population of the four affected countries. Communities have been targeted by insurgents, with the aim of acquiring resources and forcing vulnerable people from their homes. Farmers forced to abandon their land

have to rely on humanitarian assistance to feed their families. Food prices have been increasing and the destruction of infrastructure and the disruption of existing limited services have also contributed to a decrease in agricultural production.

A renewed commitment and strong partnership is required to provide timely support to the millions of people in need. While responding to the most pressing needs, it is equally important to start building longer-term resilience to shocks. We need to move towards a risk reduction and risk management approach that is planned, flexible and adaptable, to mitigate climate change impact, improve food security and nutrition, provide equitable access to resources and services and ensure sustainable growth of livelihood opportunities. Resilience needs to be strengthened by linking emergency interventions to lasting recovery and working on the humanitarian-development nexus. A holistic approach is required to address the crisis with efforts to mitigate the drivers of the conflict and strengthen local systems and communities. Issues linked to social cohesion, social capital and conflict mitigation should be an entry point to communities, building on natural resource management and land tenure.

It is within this context that FAO has decided to organize – during its 30th Regional Conference for Africa – a side event on the Lake Chad crisis to provide an overview and perspectives on actions that will help to mitigate the impact of the root causes of conflicts and instability in the region.

Venue and date: Conference Hall, 21 February 2018

The event will gather high-level representatives, ideally ministers, of the four governments (Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria), Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), G5, high-level representatives of other technical and financial partners including the World Food Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and FAO Senior Management.

Duration: 1 hour

Expected outcomes

- Shared overview of the Lake Chad Basin crisis and responses provided so far by FAO and its partners in each country;
- Increased political attention to the complexity of the crisis in the region through the linkages between sustaining peace and food security, climate change, migration and resilience building;
- Increased awareness of the crisis' response opportunities with a continued focus on promoting the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

The side event will focus on four thematic areas: peace and food security; forced migration; shock-responsive social protection; and climate change and resilience.

Opening statements will be presented by FAO, as the host, followed by a facilitated panel with statements from Representatives of the affected countries (Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria). Each high-level panelist will be asked to talk on one of the four thematic areas:

1. **Peace and food security:** Improving food security and strengthening resilience of rural populations is one way to contribute to sustaining peace in the Lake Chad Basin. Initiatives to foster rural livelihoods and support equitable natural resource management can help in preventing crises, mitigating their impacts and easing recovery and stabilization. Knowledge, learning and analysis to better understand and build the evidence to demonstrate how improving food security, rehabilitating agriculture and building resilience can contribute to conflict prevention, sustainable peace and stability is key in the Lake Chad Basin context.
2. **Forced migration:** The region has the fastest population growth in Africa; poverty, the vulnerable environment, socio-economic crises and lack of livelihood opportunities encourage people to migrate to neighbouring countries or even further. Vulnerable populations are trapped between conflict, climate change and food insecurity and are forced to leave their home. Policy initiatives to promote employment and climate resilient and diversified livelihood opportunities for all population groups, especially youth and women, would be key in the region (off farm/ecosystem services, urban, peri-urban agriculture).
3. **Shock-responsive social protection:** It has become clear that in the design of social protection schemes, governments should take into account recurrent crises and risks including climate variability, price and market shocks, which are impacting the lives of Lake Chad Basin populations. FAO in the Lake Chad Basin region supports the use of cash-based transfers as tools to save lives, restore livelihoods and increase resilience by promoting enhanced agricultural production and food and nutrition security in times of natural disaster, conflict and economic shock, and to support longer-term development and social protection initiatives.
4. **Climate change and resilience:** It is crucial to promote and support longer-term sustainable agriculture practices and policies around the Lake Chad Basin to adapt to climate change and the increasing competition over natural resources. The guiding thread for the resilience pillar is prevention to strengthen the adaptation capacity of a community or system, scaling up sustainable climate resilient experiences in soil and water management and disaster risks management.

Agenda and participants

	Moderator: TBD
5 minutes	Opening remarks/Perspectives: Mr. Bukar Tijani, Assistant Director-General/ Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Africa
15 minutes	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LCBC/CBLT• Round table with four Ministers: Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Facilitator: Niger- Presenter: Mr. Helder Muteia, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Central Africa Region
20 minutes	Questions and Answers Closure: Mr. Bukar Tijani, Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative FAO Regional Office for Africa