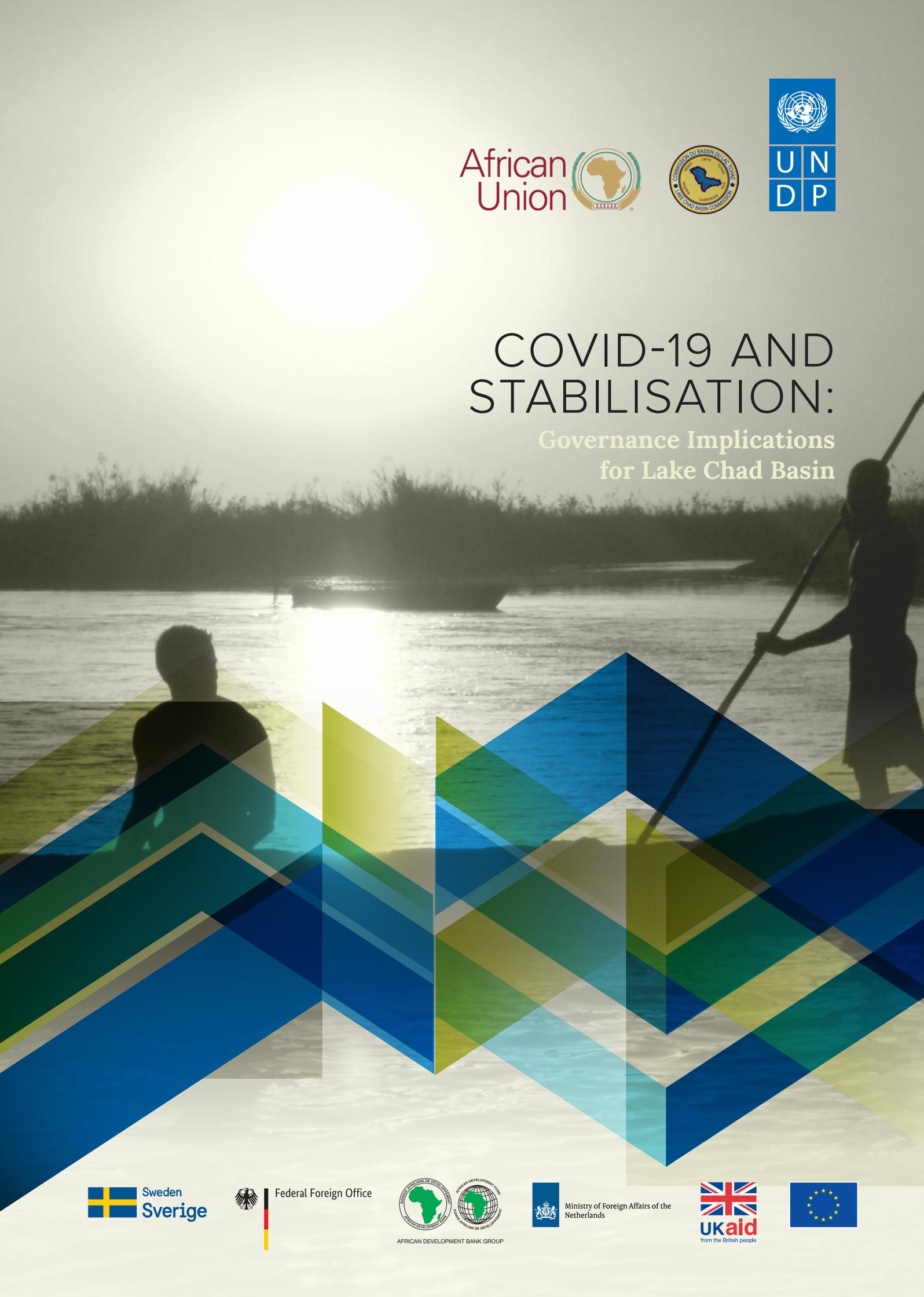




COVID-19 AND STABILISATION:

Governance Implications for Lake Chad Basin



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Executive Summary

This Situational Brief is the first in a series of rapid assessments of the implications of COVID-19 and its containment on thematic aspects of the stabilization agenda in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). This report focuses on the implications of COVID-19 and its containment measures for governance issues such as human rights, governmental democratic accountability and transparency, delivery of services, access to the market and public discontent. This report makes the following observations:

COVID-19 rising rapidly in LCB region

COVID-19 is still an evolving reality in the LCB region, as most LCB territories are likely still in the early phases of the caseload, an indication that the worst health impact is yet to come. The limited testing for COVID-19 in LCB countries means the available data underestimates the true magnitude of the caseload. As of 27 June 2020, the LCB territories recorded 828 confirmed cases, 62 fatalities and 595 fully recovered cases. The three LCB territories in Nigeria account for 73 percent of all cases and 74 percent of COVID-19 deaths in LCB territories. Borno has the highest number of confirmed cases at 477 (58 percent), followed by Cameroon's North with 122 cases (15 percent) and Far North with 89 cases (11 percent), Adamawa with 73 cases (9 percent), and Yobe with 56 cases (7 percent). The number of confirmed cases in Diffa and Lac are six and five respectively, and no case has been recorded so far in Hadjer-Lamis. Importantly, there have been rapid increases in LCB territories in Cameroon and Nigeria since the start of May; confirmed cases have increased the most in Cameroon's Far North (4,350 percent) and North (916 percent) provinces, followed by Adamawa (181 percent), Borno (103 percent) and Yobe (75 percent). The other LCB territories in Chad and Niger have had little to no increase over the same period.

COVID-19 coincides with rising insecurity

The outbreak and ravaging impacts of COVID-19 take place in the middle of the deterioration of security in the LCB that began in 2019. This was due to rising attacks by and clashes between Boko Haram and government troops. Some of the deadliest attacks by Boko Haram and expansive military offensives by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) occurred between March

and June 2020. Boko Haram factions continue to launch attacks such as those against Chadian soldiers in Litré and Bohoma; against civilians in Gubio (killing 81 people); attacks against military bases and humanitarian camps in Monguno; and incursions into Banki and Goni. Boko Haram is also using COVID-19 as part of its propaganda, suggesting that Allah (God) sent the disease to punish the ungodly. In addition, other forms of insecurity persist in the LCB region, including resource-based conflicts such as farmer-herder clashes, cattle rustling and cross-border banditry.

Shifts in COVID-19 response strategies

The national governments of LCB countries initially implemented containment measures such as national lockdowns (curfews and restrictions on interstate/province movements), closure of national borders, closure of offices and other economic spaces, restrictions on religious activities and other social congregations, and aggressive social distancing protocols. Testing procedures and public hygiene initiatives that include hand washing, use of hand sanitizers, and public health awareness and education, among other measures, also have been implemented. Also, a variety of economic palliatives, including food packs and household supplies, were initiated to cushion the impact of lockdowns and the suspension of livelihood activities. However, the palliative programs are grossly inadequate, and /or marred by accountability issues. Also, by the start of May 2020, the national lockdowns were relaxed owing to national economic imperatives, biting socioeconomic hardships and rising public tensions.

COVID-19 impact on human rights

COVID-19 and its response strategies have triggered a rise in the use of arbitrary powers, including arrests and detentions in the enforcement of COVID-19 containment measures. The response strategies by LCB countries give extra powers to security agencies to arrest citizens suspected of flouting measures such as wearing face masks, gathering in large groups and moving around the region in unauthorized ways. There are also emerging instances of the derogation of international humanitarian conventions that safeguard the rights of refugees and cross-border migrants as well as the

activities of aid and humanitarian workers. Aid and humanitarian agencies in Yobe and Borno in Northeast Nigeria also note increased operational difficulties since the onset of COVID-19 and an upsurge in military operations against violent extremists. The derogation of human rights laws and international humanitarian conventions worsens the humanitarian situation in LCB territories.

COVID-19 and government accountability and transparency

COVID-19 raises the risk and/or further exacerbates transparency and accountability gaps in public expenditure both broadly and, more specifically, concerning COVID-19 spending. The LCB countries already score poorly on ratings of accountability and transparency, and these pre-existing problems may be apparent in the response to COVID-19 by increasing the possibility of corrupt practices in the procurement of equipment and medical supplies; hindering payment of fees and allowances to health care workers and security agencies; and allocating and distributing palliatives to vulnerable persons.

COVID-19 affecting electoral process

The pandemic is already impacting elections and other democratic processes in LCB territories, including the postponement of planned election-related activities such as voter registration and local government and parliamentary elections. In Chad, legislative elections planned for March 2020 were postponed to 13 December 2020. In Niger, the electoral commission suspended voter registration exercises, raising fears that COVID-19 could affect the planned presidential and legislative elections in December 2020. Further cases of COVID-19 will put question marks on scheduled voter registration exercises and on elections, such as the presidential and national assembly elections in Niger planned for 27 December 2020, and the legislative and presidential elections in Chad planned for 13 December 2020 and April 2021, respectively.

Reduced access to services and service delivery

The combination of COVID-19 and insecurity since March 2020 complicates the delivery of social and humanitarian services to the vulnerable population in LCB territories. The twin crises compound the humanitarian crisis in the region by increasing the vulnerability of refugees, internally displaced persons and local communities that rely on humanitarian

services. Additional people and communities have been displaced since March 2020, and the pandemic limits the access to camps and the movement and delivery of services (especially health care and food). This heightens the risk of infection due to overcrowded camps housing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Also, COVID-19 has disrupted the health care system in LCB territories because of the need to repurpose available human, financial and material resources for COVID-19 at the expense of other health care needs, especially for women and children. COVID-19 has constrained the access to and delivery of education and vocational skills, and the distribution of food in LCB countries and territories.

Disrupted access to markets

COVID-19 and the response measures in LCB territories have impacted livelihoods and economic activities. Given the large size of the informal economy across the LCB, the closure of land and sea borders, the institution of curfews and the quarantine of key economic cities imposed a climate of economic hardship with implications for the financial resources available to governors of LCB territories. Reduced working hours for banks and offices limited the people's access to savings and led to an absence of support services for small- and medium-scale firms. Also, the cross-border movement of persons, goods and services, which is a historical feature of the LCB, specifically as an adaptive capacity to the effects of climate change, has been negatively affected. Finally, the pandemic has disrupted informal economic activities, especially those involving women and girls - who comprise the most vulnerable categories - because they rely on petty trading, selling food and drinks, carrying loads and hawking goods in markets, border crossings and other public centers.

Growing public discontent

COVID-19 has upped public discontent and protests over the socioeconomic effects of containment measures and broader governance issues in LCB countries. Given preexisting political tensions, activities of violent extremists, youth unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with a lack of democratic dividends in LCB countries, increases in COVID-19 cases over the short- and medium-term could trigger new protests, including the possibility of 'Arab Spring'-like upheavals. If confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths increase very rapidly in the short- and medium-term, and more stringent lockdowns are implemented, public tensions

and discontent would most likely rise in LCB countries. But if the increases in confirmed cases and deaths over the short- to medium term are low or moderate, COVID-19 may not trigger a major political upheaval in LCB countries and territories.

Recommendations

For the Regional Stabilization Facility:

1. Conduct and /or update context analysis, risk matrix and other background documents to align Regional Stabilization Facility (RSF) priorities and planning to COVID-19 response strategies in the LCB region.
2. Evolve an LCB (regional) COVID-19 response initiative as an addendum to the Regional Stabilization Strategy (RSS) by working with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the government of LCB territories, African Union, regional bodies, United Nations agencies, and aid and humanitarian agencies working in the field. The regional response would be based on coordinating responses among the LCB territories.
3. Develop guidance notes, planning templates and other programmatic resources for integrating COVID-19 into the development and implementation of territorial plans by LCB territories.
4. Analyze and track the differential impacts of COVID-19 and its containment strategies on vulnerable groups such as women, girls and children, including their access to health care, education, livelihood and protection services across LCB territories.
3. Enhance the communication and public awareness campaigns on COVID-19 to dispel myths, stop the spread of fake news, prevent the stigmatization of COVID-19 survivors and promote adequate understanding of COVID-19 preventive measures in LCB territories.
4. Partner with private sector organizations and the governments of LCB territories to adapt trading practices to COVID-19 containment measures.
5. Facilitate the establishment of a cross-border trade corridor that has been adapted to COVID-19 prevention measures in order to boost food security, livelihoods and increase the capacity to withstand COVID-19 shocks in vulnerable communities and populations in LCB territories.
6. Facilitate specialist training on COVID-19 for border guards, including effective screening procedures, to prevent cross-border transmission of the disease and minimize the disruption of the supply of livestock, sanitary materials, medicine, food and other humanitarian goods across the LCB region.

For stakeholders such as the LCB Commission, governors of LCB territories, civil society groups, aid agencies, donor partners, private sector organizations and members of the P3 countries (the United Kingdom, France and the United States) working in the Lake Chad Basin area:

1. Ensure the integration of COVID-19 into all RSS territorial plans.
2. Promote the use of e-governance tools at national and territorial levels to enhance transparency from relevant government agencies on resources devoted to supporting populations to cope with COVID-19 at territorial levels. Work with civil society groups to track and monitor COVID-19-related resource allocations and their uses in LCB territories, including IDP camps.

“

Partnership with private sector organizations and the governments of LCB territories to adapt trading practices to COVID-19 containment measures.



1. Introduction

This Situational Brief is the first in a series of rapid assessments of the implications of COVID-19 and its containment on thematic aspects of the stabilization agenda in Lake Chad Basin (LCB). This report focuses on both if and how COVID-19 and its containment measures affect governance issues in LCB, specifically governmental democratic accountability and the rule of law, delivery of services and access to markets. The thematic issues are consistent with the framing and programmatic templates on governance by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as the priorities and principles of the Regional Stabilization Strategy (RSS) and the Regional Stabilization Facility (RSF). The assessment covers the scale of COVID-19 and reflects on the impacts of the response (containment) strategies in the priority territories of Lake Chad Basin. This includes Lac and Hadjer-Lamis provinces in Chad, Diffa region in Niger, North and Far North regions in Cameroon, and Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in Northeast Nigeria.

COVID-19 is still an evolving, shifting reality in most LCB territories, and most countries are likely still in the early phases of the caseload, indicating that the worst health impact is yet to come. Also, current data are difficult to access and the limited testing for COVID-19 likely underestimates the magnitude of the caseload. Therefore, this report also reflects on if and how national-level COVID-19 containment strategies impact government accountability and observance of the rule of law, delivery of critical services (health, education, food and other humanitarian services), and access to markets by vulnerable persons and communities across the LCB region.¹ It is the view that LCB territories are already experiencing the impact of COVID-19, even if the actual number of confirmed cases is low in most LCB territories at the time of writing this paper. The impact has resulted from the national-level design and enforcement of COVID-19 containment strategies such as the declaration of national emergencies, lockdowns, curfews, restrictions on the movement of goods and services, closure of schools, and the suspension or repurposing of government capacities, among other



measures. Also, national-level economic slowdowns, the loss of revenue, depreciation of the exchange rate, closure of borders, mobilization of resources for emergency funds and efforts to expand health care spending and facilities will naturally have multiplier effects on LCB territories. The disruption of service delivery in the LCB region occasioned by COVID-19 potentially increases the vulnerability of populations and communities in LCB territories, especially women, girls, children and youth. All this has implications for the RSS and the mandate of the UNDP Regional Stabilization Facility.

¹ United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 20 May 2020, p.2
https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf

2. COVID-19 in LCB States and Territories: Confirmed Cases and Projections

The first case of COVID-19 in the LCB states was recorded in Nigeria on 28 February 2020, and the disease has since spread to LCB territories. Cameroon had its index case on 5 March, while Niger and Chad each recorded theirs on 19 March 2020. As stated in Table 1, as of 27 June 2020, data from the African Centre for Disease Control indicated that the four LCB states had a combined total of 37,865 confirmed cases, including Cameroon (12,600), Chad (865), Niger (1,100) and Nigeria (23,300).

It is difficult to decipher the actual pattern of COVID-19 in LCB states and territories because of limited testing and difficulties in obtaining disaggregated data for the region. As a result, available data may not tell the full story. Still, official national-level data points to increases in confirmed cases across LCB states, however, the rates vary; Niger and Chad are reporting relatively slower increases, while Nigeria and Cameroon are showing a higher rate of increase. For instance, between 7 May and 27 June 2020, the number of confirmed cases in Niger increased from 909 to 1,100 (21 percent), and in Chad the number increased from 519 to 865 (67 percent). Over the same period, the number of confirmed cases in Nigeria increased from 6,175 to 23,300 (277 percent), and in Cameroon the number jumped from 3,529 to 12,600 (257 percent). Moreover, the cases per million are highest in Nigeria (14,500) and Cameroon (2,179), compared with Niger (71) and Chad (13). This national-level data provides important context for understanding the disease trends in LCB territories.

Disaggregated national-level data shows that LCB territories have recorded 828 confirmed cases, 62 fatalities and 595 fully recovered cases as of 27 June 2020. The territories in Nigeria - namely Borno, Yobe and Adamawa - have the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the region, and those territories are the epicenter of the virus in the LCB region. An aid worker who died in Borno on 18 April was the first

confirmed case of COVID-19 in Northeastern Nigeria and LCB territories.² Diffa reported its index case in early May, and the Far North in Cameroon confirmed its first case on 30 April 2020.³

As indicated in Table 2 and Figure 2 below, the three LCB territories in Nigeria account for 606 confirmed cases (73 percent of all cases in LCB territories) and 46 deaths (74 percent of COVID-19 death in LCB territories). Borno has the highest number of confirmed cases with 477 cases (58 percent), followed by Cameroon's North with 122 cases (15 percent) and Far North with 89 cases (11 percent), Adamawa with 73 cases (9 percent), and Yobe with 56 cases (7 percent). The number of confirmed cases in Diffa and Lac are six and five respectively, and no case has been recorded so far in Hadjer-Lamis.

Crucially, a reading of the data over the past six weeks points to accelerated increases in some LCB territories. Since 7 May 2020, exponential increases have occurred in Cameroon's Far North (4,350 percent) and North (916 percent) provinces. Over the same period, Adamawa recorded a 181 percent increase, Borno a 103 percent increase and Yobe a 75 percent. The other LCB territories in Chad and Niger have recorded little or no increases over the same period. This points to rising cases of COVID-19 in the majority of LCB territories.

Given that Borno is easily the socioeconomic hub of the LCB region, the increasing number of cases in the territory, as well as in neighboring North, Far North, Yobe and Adamawa, make COVID-19 an on-going concern. It is also high-risk because of the potential spread to high-density areas such as camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, border crossing posts, and detention centers. The rising number of cases of community transmission reinforces this concern, and there are expectations that LCB countries and territories are yet to experience a peak in the number of COVID-19 cases.

² The New Humanitarian, 'Coronavirus and aid: What we're watching, 21-27 May', 21 May 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/05/21/coronavirus-humanitarian-aid-response>

³ CNBC Africa, 'Coronavirus – Cameroon: First Confirmed Case of COVID-19 in Far North Region', 30 April 2020, <https://www.cnbcfrance.com/africa-press-office/2020/04/30/coronavirus-cameroon-first-confirmed-case-of-covid-19-in-far-north-region/>

The World Health Organization (WHO) projections for 47 African countries, including LCB countries, suggests that they could record between 29 million and 44 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and 83,000-190,000 persons could die of COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic if containment measures fail.⁴ Relative to other parts of the world, the WHO projection notes a slower rate of transmission, younger age of people with severe disease and lower mortality rates in Africa due to socioenvironmental factors and prior experience of controlling communicable diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. The projection also flags the possibility of a more prolonged outbreak over a few years, with smaller countries such as Cameroon being at high risk if containment measures are not prioritized or become ineffective. The WHO Regional Director for Africa observes, “While COVID-19 likely won’t spread as exponentially in Africa as it has elsewhere in the world, it likely will smoulder in transmission hotspots. COVID-19 could become a fixture in our lives for the next several years unless a proactive approach is taken by many governments in the region. We need to test, trace, isolate and treat.”⁵

FIGURE 1:
Graph of Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in LCB Countries Relative to Regional and Continental Patterns

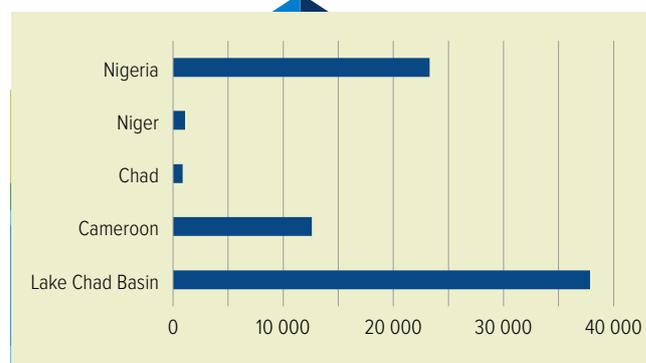


TABLE 1:
National-level Data for LCB Countries⁶

	Confirmed Cases	Cases per million ⁷	Deaths	Recoveries
<i>Africa</i>	359,408		9,283	173,057
<i>Lake Chad Basin</i>	37,865		1,008	20,102
<i>Cameroon</i>	12,600	2,179	313	10,100
<i>Chad</i>	865	13	74	778
<i>Niger</i>	1,100	71	57	924
<i>Nigeria</i>	23,300	14,500	554	8,300

4 World Health Organization (WHO), 'New WHO estimates: Up to 190 000 people could die of COVID-19 in Africa if not controlled', 7 May 2020, <https://www.afro.who.int/news/new-who-estimates-190-000-people-could-die-covid-19-africa-if-not-controlled>

5 Ibid.

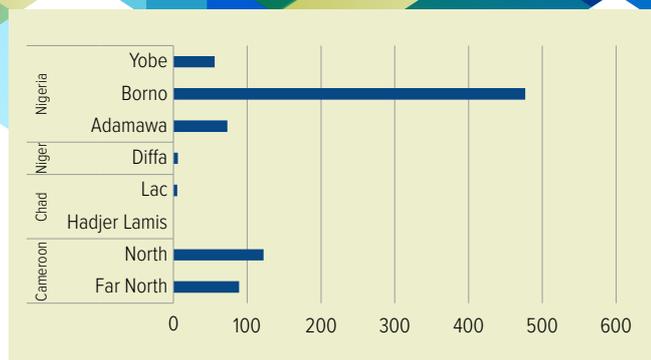
6 Unless stated otherwise, COVID-19 data used in this report are from African Centre for Disease Control, <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>

7 See <https://visalist.io/emergency/coronavirus/nigeria-country>

TABLE 2:
COVID-19 Cases in LCB Territories.

Country	LCB Territory	Confirmed Cases	Deaths	Recovered
Cameroon ⁸	Far North	89	5	55
	North	122	11	71
Chad ⁹	Hadjer Lamis	0	-	-
	LAC	5	-	-
Niger ¹⁰	Diffa	6	-	-
Nigeria ¹¹	Adamawa	73	6	37
	Borno	477	32	387
	Yobe	56	8	45
	Total	317	27	106

FIGURE 2:
Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in LCB Territories as of 27 June 2020



Despite the limited testing capacities, available data over the short-term (since the start of May 2020), in Nigeria and its LCB territories point to steady increases, including a spike in daily infection rates, because aspects of the response strategies (e.g., lockdowns) were either relaxed or poorly implemented (flouted).¹² The relaxation of national lockdowns and other

COVID-19 containment measures from May 2020 is already increasing the number of confirmed cases, as highlighted above.

As such, LCB countries and territories face an uncertain future over COVID-19 cases; available projections and emerging evidence point to a higher rate of infections and confirmed cases and fatalities since May 2020. The United Nations Secretary-General warned, “Low case numbers relative to other regions have raised hopes that African countries may be spared the worst of the pandemic, but caution is in order. The disease is still not fully understood. Minimal capacities for testing and reporting cases may mean that official numbers do not provide a full picture of the COVID-19 caseload in Africa.”¹³ Worse still, any rapid increase in COVID-19 cases would be devastating for the LCB territories given the weak health care infrastructures, existing humanitarian challenges and a lack of financial resources to cope with high numbers of COVID-19 cases.¹⁴

8 Data is as of 14 June 2020, see Cameroon: Rapport de situation COVID-19, No. 36, Période du 14 au 19/06/2020.

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/cmr_covid19_sitrep36.pdf

9 Data is as of 21 May 2020, see <https://www.covid19-tchad.org/>

10 Data is as of 21 May 2020, see <https://coronavirus.ne/carte-interactive/>

11 Data is as of 21 May 2020; see <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/>

12 Data from Africa CDC indicate that since the lockdown was relaxed in Nigeria and Cameroon at the start of May, daily confirmed cases have more or less doubled, though it is unclear if the increases also reflect an increased number of tests carried out daily.

13 United Nations, ‘Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa’, 2020, p.2.

14 According to the UNDP HDI rating of the preparedness of 28 African countries for COVID-19, the two LCB states included in the assessment (Nigeria and Cameroon) were given low preparedness ratings on all indices except for mobile phone subscription per 100, and nurses and midwives for 10,000. See, United Nations, ‘Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa, 2020, p.9.

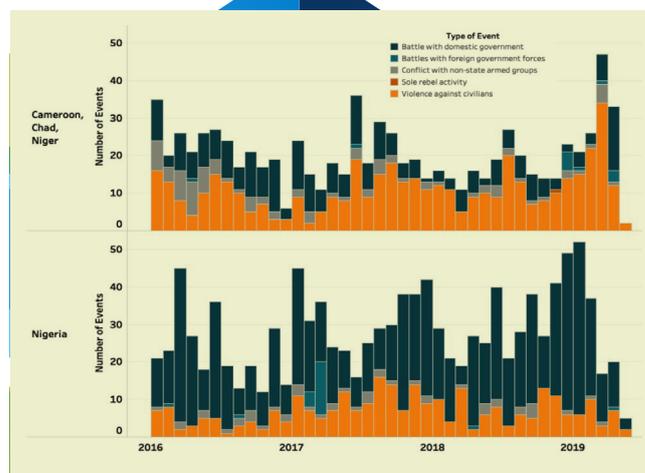
3. Overview of Security Situation Since COVID-19 Outbreak

The LCB region was an active military-security zone before the outbreak of COVID-19, and it has remained so ever since. The responses to COVID-19, including measures taken to limit its spread, have further complicated the security situation in the region, including the suffering by civilians and communities.¹⁵ The LCB countries launched new military offensives at the end of April 2020 in response to a steady deterioration in the security of the LCB in the months before the outbreak of COVID-19.¹⁶ As indicated in Figure 3, Boko Haram shifted its attacks from inside to outside of Nigeria beginning in 2019. This included targeted attacks against security posts, bases and military convoys - such as attacks against a Nigerian military convoy that killed over 50 troops in Goneri, Eastern Borno - and an attack against a Chadian military base on the Bohoma Peninsula, Lac Province in Chad that killed nearly 100 troops.¹⁷ In fact, clashes between Chadian troops and Boko Haram fighters are estimated to have tripled in 2019.¹⁸

Therefore, the outbreak of COVID-19 in the LCB coincided with increased security activities by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF); Chad, Niger and Nigeria launched major operations around the Tunbuns Islands of Lake Chad against Boko Haram and its splinter group, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). The coordinated military operations were in response to recent attacks by violent extremist groups with the objective of rolling back the tide of insecurity in the LCB territories. In early April, Chad declared its side of Lake Chad as a 'war zone' and undertook

military operations to dislodge violent extremist groups; the Chadian military claims to have killed over 1,000 violent extremists during the operation.¹⁹ In Niger's Diffa region, security forces in cooperation with the regional MNJTF launched a new military offensive to disrupt and dislodge violent extremist groups from the islands of Lake Chad.²⁰ Nigeria also stepped up its military campaign under Operation Lafiya Dole, with hot pursuits and coordinated air and land attacks against Boko Haram positions in the Northeast of the country.²¹

FIGURE 3:
Violent Activity Involving Boko Haram by Type of Event and Location (Jan. 1, 2016 – May 11, 2019).



Source: ACLED, 'No Home Field Advantage: The Expansion of Boko Haram's Activity Outside of Nigeria in 2019'²²

15 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 2020, p. 21.

16 UN News, 'West Africa 'shaken by unprecedented violence', UN envoy tells Security Council', 16 December 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/12/1053641>.

17 BBC News, 'Boko Haram kills troops in 'deadliest' Chad raid', 25 March 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52038111>. See also, The New Humanitarian, " Militancy in Lake Chad and Mozambique, COVID-19 in Gaza and Syria: The Cheat Sheet", 27 March 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/27/lake-chad-mozambique-militancy-gaza-syria-coronavirus>

18 Eizenga, D., 'Chad's Escalating Fight against Boko Haram', African Centre for Strategic Studies, 20 April 2020, <file:///C:/Users/k1469895/Downloads/africacenter.org-Chads%20Escalating%20Fight%20against%20Boko%20Haram.pdf>

19 Voice of America (VOA) News, '1,000 Boko Haram Fighters Killed in Raid, Chad Army Reports', 10 April 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/1000-boko-haram-fighters-killed-raid-chad-army-reports>

20 International Crisis Group, 'Niger: Overview', April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

21 <https://www.dw.com/en/increased-terror-attacks-in-africa-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/a-53066398>

22 ACLED, 'No Home Field Advantage: The Expansion of Boko Haram's Activity Outside of Nigeria in 2019', 20 May 2020, p.3, <https://acleddata.com/2019/05/20/no-home-field-advantage-the-expansion-of-boko-harams-activity-outside-of-nigeria-in-2019/>

Despite the recent and ongoing military offensive against violent extremist groups, high- and low-intensity security challenges remain in the LCB region. On the one hand, violent extremist groups continue to launch attacks such as the Boko Haram ISWAP faction's attack and killing of two Chadian soldiers in Litri, and a series of Boko Haram attacks in Northeast Nigeria (Gaidam, Dapchi and Chibok) in April and May 2020. After a brief lull occasioned by the MNJTF military offensives, Boko Haram both resumed and stepped-up attacks in June 2020, including attacks against civilians in Gubio (killing 81 people),²³ incursions into Banki and Goni, and coordinated attacks against military bases and humanitarian camps in Monguno. The attack on Monguno is significant, as it targeted one of the largest humanitarian hubs, and it involved the use of heavy weapons by Boko Haram, including 40 gun-trucks (technical) and over 200 fighters. Boko Haram also left notes warning people to avoid Monguno and to stop working with humanitarian agencies.²⁴ Boko Haram is also using COVID-19 as part of its propaganda, suggesting it is a punishment from Allah (God) to the ungodly, and that Boko Haram members were on the side of God; according to the current leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, "We pray five times a day, we pray Jummu'a, we sleep with our families, we hug, we shake hands, we are fine, fine," he said on an audio recording that he issued. "We have anti-virus while you are infected with the coronavirus, we have anti-coronavirus."²⁵

At the same time, other forms of insecurity persist in the LCB region, including resource-based conflicts such as farmer-herder clashes, cattle rustling and cross-border banditry. For example, in April Chad recorded a violent dispute over the ownership of a mosque left in Hadjer-Lamis province and farmer-herder clashes in Chad's

Mayo-Kebbi East province.²⁶ Worse still, violent extremist groups in the region (Boko Haram and ISWAP) have sought to counter government public health warnings and messages by describing them as 'illegitimate and indicated that it opposed the closure of mosques and Islamic schools, making the population and communities under its control particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infections.'²⁷ In Adamawa (Lamurde local government area), farmer-herder clashes in May 2020 led to 73 fatalities and the displacement of communities, leaving an estimated 81,110 persons in need of humanitarian assistance.²⁸ It is possible that resource-based conflicts could increase in the context of socioeconomic hardships arising from COVID-19 in the LCB region.

The combination of COVID-19 and measures taken to limit its spread and the increased tempo of security operations in the LCB region since March 2020 continues to have major effects on civilians and local communities.²⁹ This includes displacements, restricted movements, limited access to essential humanitarian services, heightened insecurity and loss of livelihoods. For instance, since the deterioration in security accelerated in 2018, aid agencies have been unable to reach an estimated 1.2 million people (a 30 percent increase over the previous year) and humanitarian activities have been hampered by new measures introduced by the military, including the banning (suspension) of some aid agencies, restrictions on the movement of aid convoys, and the requirement for humanitarian agencies to 'undergo lengthy processes to obtain compulsory authorization for moving personnel, cash, and cargo-carrying relief materials in the northeast region. The military mandated using armed escorts on some routes, banned certain types of goods, and limited the amount of fuel the agencies can use in the field.'³⁰

23 Premium Times, 'Gubio Attack: Death toll now 81; village head, six others abducted', 10 June 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/397061-gubio-attack-death-toll-now-81-village-head-six-others-abducted.html>

24 BBC News, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis: UN 'appalled' by twin jihadist attacks in Borno', 14 June 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53041886>

25 Campbell, J., 'Boko Haram's Shekau Labels Anti-COVID-19 Measures an Attack on Islam in Nigeria', Council on Foreign Relations, 17 April, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/boko-harams-shekau-labels-anti-covid-19-measures-attack-islam-nigeria>

26 International Crisis Group, 'Chad: Overview', April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

27 Ibid.

28 Sunnews Online, 'Stemming recurring herders/farmers clashes', 7 June 2020, <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/stemming-recurring-herders-farmers-clashes/>

29 IOM, 'Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis', April 2020, Dakar, <https://rodakar.iom.int/sites/default/files/document/publications/Sahel%20and%20Lake%20Chad%20Background%20Brief%20-%20COVID-19.pdf>

30 Human Rights Watch, 'Nigeria: Army Restrictions Stifling Aid Efforts', 4 March 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/04/nigeria-army-restrictions-stifling-aid-efforts>

4. Responses to COVID-19 in the LCB States and Territories

The respective national governments of LCB countries set the national response strategies that have implications for LCB territories. Each LCB country has responded with different types of measures to suppress and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by limiting the reproductive rate of the virus and slow its spread through communities.

As indicated in Annex 1, the national governments of LCB countries, in a bid to flatten the curve of COVID-19 transmission, implemented a variety of COVID-19 containment measures to varying degrees including curfews; restrictions on interstate/province movements; closures of air, land and sea borders; closures of offices and other economic spaces; restrictions on religious activities and other social congregations; and aggressive social distancing protocols. Testing procedures and public hygiene initiatives - including hand washing, using hand sanitizers and adopting public health awareness and education campaigns - have also been implemented. Also, a variety of economic palliatives, including food packs and household supplies, were distributed to cushion the impact of lockdowns and the suspension of livelihood activities. Governments of LCB states also introduced macroeconomic measures, including fiscal and monetary adjustments to repurpose funds, in order to direct funding to COVID-19 response activities. Governments also replanned national budgets to account for the expected economic slowdown (recession) during and after COVID-19.

However, by the start of May 2020, there was evidence that the national governments of LCB countries had begun attempting to address the macroeconomic impacts of COVID-19 through the introduction of aggressive fiscal and monetary measures, as well as to contain the surging social tension and anger arising from the lockdown measures. In some LCB countries, discontent was rising among citizens due to the economic hardship caused by the lockdown, including hunger, food insecurity (impact on the

planting season), job losses and the collapse of small- and medium-scale business.³¹ In Cameroon, the containment measures impacted the ability of people in North and Far North provinces to access critical social services, especially humanitarian services, and constrained access to livelihood activities (farms and markets).³² The lockdown measures, including border closures, impacted cross-border trade and movement. Specifically impacted was the livestock industry, which wanted to move cattle from Chad through Cameroon's Gaboru-Ngala border with Nigeria, and the fisheries industry, which wanted to move its products around Lake Chad to major cities in Nigeria. As well, the lockdown measures led to a concentration of travelers stranded at border posts.

The palliative measures introduced by the LCB governments to support their poorest citizens proved to be grossly inadequate, and /or marred by accountability issues (see sections 5b and 5f below). All this puts into context the difficulties of enforcing and sustaining the containment measures, especially the closure of markets, over a long period. It is more difficult across the LCB, where most people derive their livelihoods from the informal sector and observing social distancing in densely populated cities, markets and camps for internally displaced persons will always be problematic.³³ National governments in LCB countries introduced many of the socioeconomic palliatives toward the end of April. In Nigeria, for instance, a phased and gradual easing of lockdown measures was approved beginning 4 May 2020; the national lockdown and border closures were lifted while the measures retained included a national overnight curfew, a ban on interstate travel and the controlled interstate movement of goods and services. The mandatory use of face masks in public was retained. Cameroon adopted a similar relaxation of containment measures, but the requirement to wear face masks in public was retained.³⁴

31 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Cameroon (OCHA-Cameroon), 'CAMEROON: COVID 19 Emergency: Situation Report No. 1', 18 May 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20.05.20-ocha_cameroon_sitrep_covid-19_ndeg1.pdf

32 Ibid.

33 OXFAM, 'Supporting Livelihoods in the Lake Chad Basin', Briefing Note, March 2018, <https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/bn-supporting-livelihoods-lake-chad-basin-280318-en.pdf>

34 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'West and Central Africa Report: 13 May 2020', p. 2, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/76435>

5. Emerging Impacts on Governance Issues

a. Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws

The first clear impact is the potential and actual instances of a rise in the use of arbitrary powers, including arrests and detentions, in the enforcement of COVID-19 containment measures. The lockdowns imposed by LCB countries give extra powers to security agencies to arrest citizens suspected of flouting measures such as wearing face masks, gathering in large groups and moving through the area in unauthorized ways. The deployment of soldiers, armed police and other paramilitaries raises the risk of lethal force being used to enforce the COVID-19 containment measures.

There are empirical pointers in this regard; in Cameroon, for instance, the police detained hundreds of people for unauthorized movement and /or failure to wear face masks, seized 250 motorcycles and impounded hundreds of taxis;³⁵ also, six opposition activists were arrested in Yaoundé for distributing face masks and hand sanitizer gels to the public.³⁶ In Nigeria, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported receiving 105 complaints of human rights violations, including at least 18 extra-judicial killings by authorities during the lockdown (between 30 March and 13 April).³⁷ The closure of offices and reduction in operations by major government agencies such as the police, courts and prisons also points to delays of judicial proceedings and backlogs of cases (delay of justice), and increased overcrowding of cells and detention facilities in LCB countries.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the response strategies have also worsened socioeconomic hardships across LCB countries and have impacted the human rights and

civil liberties of women and girls, especially in relation to sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV). This is addressed in another Situational Brief on COVID-19 and SGBV in Lake Chad Basin.

There are also emerging instances of the derogation of international humanitarian laws and conventions on international movement and travels, the rights of refugees and cross-border migrants, and the activities of aid and humanitarian efforts. Across LCB countries, the proclamation of national emergencies came with restrictions on basic freedoms, especially movement between LCB territories and mainland cities, and cross-border movement of persons at risk, including migrants and refugees. In Chad, Decree 38 imposed overnight curfews on all towns (including LCB territories), and intercity/regional travel initially was suspended (and later extended) for two weeks at the start of April 2020, with vehicles carrying goods only allowed to enter towns between 2200 hours and 0500 hours daily.³⁸ Also in April, the IOM reported that over 2,500 migrants returning to their home countries (including 1,100 Chadian students), were stranded at transit centers in border areas of Niger, Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso. Niger later approved a humanitarian corridor for moving migrants in IOM transit centers across the territory pending authorization from countries of origin.³⁹ Aid and humanitarian agencies in Yobe and Borno in Northeast Nigeria also noted increased operational difficulties since the onset of COVID-19 and an upsurge in military operations against violent extremists. This has been attributed to new operational licensing requirements and restrictions on movements by military and civilian authorities.⁴⁰

35 VOA News, 'Cameroon Arrests People Without Masks as COVID-19 Cases Increase', 14 May 2020,

<https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/cameroon-arrests-people-without-masks-covid-19-cases-increase>

36 The Levant News, 'Coronavirus: Cameroon arrests six opposition activists for distributing face masks', 15 May 2020,

<https://thelevantnews.com/en/2020/05/coronavirus-cameroon-arrests-six-opposition-activists-for-distributing-face-masks/>

37 International Crisis Group, 'Nigeria: Overview', April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

38 Radio France Internationale (RFI), 'Chad begins coronavirus lockdown amid lack of Covid-19 testing', 8 May 2020,

<http://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200508-chad-begins-coronavirus-lockdown-amid-lack-of-covid-19-testing>

39 IOM, 'Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis', April 2020, Dakar.

40 Human Rights Watch, 'Nigeria: Army Restrictions Stifling Aid Efforts', 24 March 2020,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/04/nigeria-army-restrictions-stifling-aid-efforts>

The derogation of human rights laws and international humanitarian conventions worsens the humanitarian situation in LCB territories. A humanitarian snapshot by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) at the end of April 2020 revealed that over 2.7 million people have fled their homes and are suffering from physical and emotional strain and lack shelter, food and adequate access to clean water, hygiene and basic sanitation; these conditions make them vulnerable to COVID-19. The assessment also noted an increased risk of acute malnutrition (up to 400,000 children are at risk) and heightened food insecurity in the LCB region due to the closure of borders and markets; the number of food-insecure persons is expected to increase from 3.6 million to 4.6 million by the lean season of 2020, even without the effect of COVID-19.⁴¹

b. Government Accountability and Transparency Issues

COVID-19 raises the risk and /or further exacerbates transparency and accountability gaps in public expenditure broadly and, more specifically, concerning COVID-19 spending. The preexisting poor ratings of LCB countries on accountability and transparency issues suggests an increased possibility of corrupt practices in several areas including the procurement of equipment and medical supplies; the payment of fees and allowances to health care workers and security agencies; and the allocation and distribution of palliatives to vulnerable persons. The acceptable wisdom that more money increases the risk of corruption suggests that the projected new (additional) health spending of \$10.6 billion in Africa increases the risk of corruption in COVID-19 responses.⁴² Financial integrity and accountability in the use of COVID-19 emergency funds, debt forbearance and borrowing will be key to the effectiveness of health care services and socioeconomic recovery in LCB countries and territories.⁴³

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The derogation of human rights laws and international humanitarian conventions worsens the humanitarian situation in LCB territories.

Publicly available data are scarce on the use of COVID-19 resources in LCB territories at the time of this report, but the national-level dynamic of LCB countries makes this an important concern. As indicated in Table 3 and Table 4 below, LCB states are not among the top performers in the ratings of African countries on good governance (transparency and accountability) and anti-corruption. In 2019 the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), which assesses and scores 54 African countries on governance, ranked Niger 24th; Nigeria 33rd; Cameroon 36th; and Chad 46th. The LCB countries in 2019 also scored low in the perception of corruption. On a scale of 180, the results were: Niger (120); Nigeria (146); Cameroon (153); and Chad (162). This is underpinned by persistent weaknesses in public expenditure systems and limited progress in the reform of procurement processes and institutions in the LCB states over the years. For instance, three LCB countries (Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria) are among the 24 African countries that scored below the continental average of 3.1 (out of 6.0) in the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) of public sector management and institutions cluster.⁴⁴ Issues such as these inform the inclusion of transparency requirements around the \$3.4 billion loan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Nigeria, as well as the request by 99 Human Rights and Governance advocacy groups to include anti-corruption measures in the disbursement of all COVID-19 funds.⁴⁵

41 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 'Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 27 April 2020)', <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-27-april-2020>.

42 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 'COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies', 2020 p. 3, <https://www.uneca.org/publications/covid-19-africa-protecting-lives-and-economies>

43 Ibid., p. 13. See also The Conversation, 'Coronavirus: corruption in health care could get in the way of Nigeria's response', 4 May 2020, <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-corruption-in-health-care-could-get-in-the-way-of-nigerias-response-136913>

44 UNECA, 'COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies', 2020 p. 14.

45 Human Rights Watch, 'IMF: Empower Civic Groups Against Covid-19 Corruption', 4 May 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/04/imf-empower-civic-groups-against-covid-19-corruption>

TABLE 3:
Transparency and Accountability Rating of LCB Countries in 2019.

	Rank	Overall Governance Scores (out of 100)	Transparency and Accountability scores
Cameroon	36	46.2	26.8
Chad	46	35.4	23.6
Niger	24	51.2	38.3
Nigeria	33	47.9	34.5

Source: Africa Governance Report 2019⁴⁶

TABLE 4:
Corruption Perception Index of LCB Countries 2019

	Corruption Perceptions Index		Global Corruption Barometer (*since the most recent publication of the GCB)	
	Rank (out of 180)	Score (out of 100)	Percentage of people who thought corruption increased in the previous 12 months	Percentage of public service users who paid a bribe in the previous 12 months
Cameroon	153	25	72%	48%
Chad	162	20	n.a.	n.a.
Niger	120	32	62%	23%
Nigeria	146	26	43%	44%

Source: Corruption Perception Index 2019⁴⁷

c. Postponement of Elections

The climate of national emergencies in LCB countries has direct governance-related consequences, including on elections and democratic governance in LCB territories. The emergency context reduces the space and capacity of civil society monitoring and advocacy activities with respect to good governance, anti-corruption and human rights. This raises the risk of reduced monitoring of government accountability and transparency concerning the enforcement of lockdown measures. The national-level situation could impact LCB territories if COVID-19 cases accelerate over the medium- to long-term.

More importantly, COVID-19 could and already is impacting elections and other democratic processes in LCB territories. COVID-19 and the response measures increase the risk of suspension or postponement of planned election-related activities such as voter registration and local government and parliamentary elections. In Chad, legislative elections planned for March 2020 were postponed to 13 December 2020. This is the latest in a series of election postponements since 2015.⁴⁸ In Niger, the parliament extended the public health emergency declaration by three months (until July 2020) and the electoral commission suspended voter registration exercises, raising fears COVID-19 could affect the planned presidential and legislative elections in December 2020.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), 2018 IIAG data and technical resources: Datasets, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/african-governance-report-2019-agendas-2063-2030-africa-track>

⁴⁷ Transparency International, 'Corruption Perception Index 2019', 2019, https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019_CPI_Report_EN_200331_141425.pdf

⁴⁸ Garda World, 'Chad: Legislative elections to be held on December 13 /update 3', 3 April 2020, <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/328896/chad-legislative-elections-to-be-held-on-december-13-update-3>

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, 'Niger: Overview', April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Going forward, increasing cases of COVID-19 infections over the short- and medium-term will put question marks, or the risk of further postponements, on scheduled voter registration exercises and elections such as presidential and national assembly elections in Niger planned for 27 December 2020; and legislative and presidential elections in Chad planned for 13 December 2020 and April 2021, respectively. The spread of COVID-19 in LCB territories is also going to change the way elections are organized, as the voting and the resulting collation processes will have to be adapted to COVID-19 prevention measures. This will lead to additional costs and logistical burdens for organizing elections; Chad has cited inadequate resources to cover costs as a reason for the postponement of legislative elections since 2015. The process of adapting elections to COVID-19, if not properly accompanied by increased voter education, could impact voter turnout as well; social distancing measures, for instance, could make voting take longer (longer queues and increased voting time per voter) and the use of face masks may be required.

d. Reduced Access to Services and Service Delivery

The coincidence of the COVID-19 outbreak (and containment measures), and the increased tempo of security activities and economic slowdowns in the LCB region (territories) since March 2020 further complicates the delivery of social and humanitarian services to the vulnerable population in LCB territories. Emerging data point to at least four impacts of COVID-19 on access to social and humanitarian services in the LCB region. First, **COVID-19 and containment measures compound the humanitarian crisis** in the region by increasing the vulnerability of refugees, internally displaced persons and local communities. The COVID-19 pandemic and rising insecurity have triggered prolonged displacement and an increased number of persons needing humanitarian services in the LCB region. For instance, an additional 50,000 persons have been displaced since the start of the year, and this has increased the resource requirement for

humanitarian services. In June 2020, 'The UN released a revised 2020 HRP for Nigeria in light of the COVID-19 crisis, requesting nearly \$1.1 billion—an increase of approximately 30 percent compared to the \$839 million requested in the March 2020 appeal—to provide emergency assistance to 7.8 million crisis-affected people in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe.'⁵⁰

Furthermore, COVID-19 also restricts the access of humanitarian agencies to internally displaced persons camps, and impacts the movement and delivery of services (especially health care and food) to vulnerable communities. It also heightens the risk of infection in insecure and overcrowded camps housing refugees and internally displaced persons and at closed border posts where stranded travelers and returnees gather. Some of the overcrowded camps include those in Banki, a town in Bama Local Government Area (LGA) and Ngala in Gamboru-Ngala LGA on the Nigerian-Cameroon border, although UNHCR is working to decongest them.⁵¹ The containment measures have left more than 10,000 migrants stranded at border posts or transit centers across the LCB region, and the lack of social distancing and basic hygiene facilities in these centers raises fears of COVID transmissions.⁵² It is also estimated that recent military operations and COVID-19 containment displaced over 20,000 people living on the Lake Chad islands, and they have been left with limited access to food and basic services and are vulnerable to safety and health risks.⁵³

Second, **COVID-19 has disrupted the health care system** in LCB countries and territories through the repurposing of available human, financial and material resources for COVID-19 at the expense of other health care needs, especially for women and children. The COVID-19 containment measures, such as border closures, have delayed the supply of sanitary materials and other basic health care needs, especially for landlocked LCB countries (Niger and Chad). In Chad, the COVID-19 outbreak has led to a drop in measles vaccination rates and consequently has led to a rise in measles cases.⁵⁴ In Cameroon and Chad, COVID-19

50 U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), 'Lake Chad Basin: Complex Emergency', Fact Sheet No. 3, FY 2020, 26 June 2020, p.2, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/06_26_20%20-%20USAID-BHA%20Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Complex%20Emergency%20Fact%20Sheet%20%233.pdf

51 UNHCR, 'West and Central Africa Report: 13 May 2020', p.5, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/76435>

52 IOM, 'Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis', April 2020.

53 Ibid.

54 UN OCHA, 'CHAD: Situation Report: 22 May 2020', <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/chad>

exposes the weaknesses and challenges of the health sector, including the lack of PPE, lack of tests and poor screening and testing procedures (especially at entry points), ventilators, limited hospitalization capacity, and disruption of medical supply chains because of border closures.⁵⁵

To this extent, COVID-19 exposes and further weakens the delivery of health care in LCB countries and territories. The COVID-19 pandemic lays bare the lack of medical personnel, support equipment, respirators, testing kits, and personal protective equipment, and the inadequate funding to match immediate needs. In Niger, 143 health workers (19 percent of the total confirmed cases) were affected as of early May 2020, which negatively impacted treatment capacities.⁵⁶ In Chad, 30 of the 117 confirmed COVID-19 cases at the end of April were medical personnel.⁵⁷ In Nigeria, around 6 percent (113) of the confirmed COVID-19 cases at the start of May were medical personnel.⁵⁸ In fact, on 18 April, Borno witnessed the death of one health care worker deployed by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); the fact that the worker had no history of travel outside of Borno and worked in a displacement camp in Pulka, on the border with Cameroon, heightened fears among aid workers and raised strong suspicions of community transmission in IDP and refugee camps.⁵⁹

Third, **COVID-19 has constrained the access to and delivery of education and vocational training** in LCB countries and territories. This compounds the pre-COVID situation in which over 1,000 schools were already closed, and teachers were being abducted or killed due to insecurity. In May 2020, the UNHCR noted that school closures were impacting 140 million children across West and Central Africa.⁶⁰ The United Nations Secretary-General echoed those concerns, noting the difficulties of accessing education online in sub-



Saharan Africa because close to 90 percent of students lack access to household computers; 82 percent lack online connections; over 8.5 million teachers are unable to learn or teach from home; and around 56 million students live in areas that are not served by mobile networks.⁶¹ In border areas of Cameroon and Chad, especially those hosting refugee camps, UNHCR and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are working to support government education ministries to establish distance learning through radio, telephone, television and online channels and to distribute school work packs to the most vulnerable pupils; however, ‘only 20 % of refugee-hosting areas can access a radio

55 ‘CAMEROON: COVID 19 Emergency: Situation Report No. 1’, 18 May 2020,

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20.05.20-ocha_cameroon_sitrep_covid-19_ndeg1.pdf

56 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), ‘NIGER: COVID-19 Situation Report – #04 27 April to 03 May 2020’, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Niger%20COVID-19%20Situation%20Report%20No.%204%20-%2027%20April%20-03%20May%202020.pdf>

57 africanews.com, ‘Chad: 30 medical staff contract COVID-19’, 5 May 2020, <https://www.africanews.com/2020/05/05/chad-30-medical-staff-contract-covid-19/>

58 Anadolu Agency (AA) News, ‘Nigeria: 113 healthcare workers infected with COVID-19’, 1 May 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-113-healthcare-workers-infected-with-covid-19/1825398>

59 Clowes, William, ‘Aid Worker Dies of Covid-19 in Nigeria’s War-Torn Northeast’, Bloomberg, 20 April 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-20/aid-worker-dies-of-covid-19-in-nigeria-s-war-torn-northeast>

60 UNHCR, ‘West and Central Africa Report: 13 May 2020’, p. 4, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/76435>

61 UN SG Report, p. 19 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf

signal and alternative methods are in place to ensure the continuity of education'.⁶²

Finally, **COVID-19 has disrupted food distribution**, overall aid sector logistics and the supply chain. The restrictions introduced due to an upsurge in security activities by the military and enforced lockdowns by COVID-19 combined to significantly impact aid and humanitarian operations in LCB territories, especially in Northeastern Nigeria and Hadjer-Lamis and Lac in Chad. In Nigeria, for instance, aid agencies report that the movement and distribution of food are now prolonged due to the need for military clearance (permits) and escorts and also to the use of new crowd management protocols. It is feared that this threatens the delivery of services to roughly 800,000 internally displaced persons scattered in 229 congested camps throughout Borno State.⁶³

e. Disrupted Access to Market

The continuous spread of COVID-19 and the implementation of containment measures in LCB countries and territories will continue to impact livelihoods and economic activities. Given the large size of the informal economy across the LCB, the closure of land and sea borders, the imposition of curfews, the quarantine of key economic cities, and the overall economic slowdown, populations and local communities in LCB territories will continue to feel impacts in the following ways.

First, **the global and national economic slowdown triggered by COVID-19 imposes a climate of economic hardship with implications for the trade sector (especially small and medium enterprises) of the economy in LCB territories.** Disrupted international trade, the collapse of oil and commodity prices, and reduced government revenues significantly impact livelihoods and national economic growth (and may lead to a recession). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates the effects of COVID-19 to include the reduced inflow of foreign direct investments and remittances, increased capital

flights, tightening of domestic financial markets, currency exchange rate depreciation and a decline in economic growth with a 1.4 percentage point reduction in economic growth (from 3.2 percent to 1.8 percent based on March 2020 estimates).⁶⁴ This could deprive '...19 million people of their livelihoods and, in the context of weak social protection programmes in Africa, pushing up to 29 million more people into poverty.'⁶⁵ For example, Nigeria is projected to lose \$14-\$19 billion in oil revenues and see an increase in its fiscal deficit to -2.6 percent of GDP and debts rising to 55.8 percent of GDP.⁶⁶ One clear impact of this is the reduced financial resources available to governors of LCB territories as central government allocations dwindle and the capacity to raise internally generated revenue is curtailed due to lockdowns. This will impact their capacity to meet social service obligations, as well as reduce the scope of the stabilization and recovery plans that can be implemented as envisaged under the RSS.

Second, the mixture of closing and/or reducing working hours for banks and offices impacts vulnerable people by limiting their access to savings and leading to an absence of support services for small- and medium-scale firms. Worse still, vulnerable households have limited access to online banking services thereby limiting their access to savings and other assets.⁶⁷ This could also trigger the loss of local jobs in the banking and financial services industries.

Third, COVID-19 directly impacts the cross-border movement of persons, goods and services, which is a historical feature of the LCB, specifically as part of the adaptive capacities to the effects of climate change. The closure of key border posts, especially the strategic Gamboru-Ngala crossing that connects and facilitates socioeconomic exchanges between Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria, affects the livelihoods and seasonal movement of labor and livestock. The closure of official border posts usually triggers attempts by small-scale traders to explore unofficial crossing points, which puts them at risk of being robbed and being forced to

62 UNHCR, 'West and Central Africa Report: 13 May 2020', p. 2, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/76435>

63 The New Humanitarian, 'Coronavirus and aid: What we're watching, 21-27 May', 21 May 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/05/21/coronavirus-humanitarian-aid-response>

64 UNECA, 'COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies', 2020, p. 3.

65 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 2020, p. 15.

66 UNECA, 'COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies', 2020, p. 6 & 13.

67 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 2020, p. 10.

make illegal payment of taxes (bribes).⁶⁸ Expectedly, the landlocked nature of Chad and Niger and reliance on Cameroon and Nigeria for port access means additional economic hardships and vulnerabilities (including food insecurity) for populations in LCB territories. Similarly, military operations and COVID-related border restrictions between Nigeria and Chad around Lake Chad disrupt the all-important trade in fisheries as suppliers of the fresh and smoked fish product are unable to move their goods to markets in Maiduguri and other cities in Northern Nigeria (Kano, Kaduna and Abuja). It is feared that without pre-emptive measures, such as adequate screening and testing or isolation facilities, the resumption of border crossings will pose sanitary risks.⁶⁹

Fourth, **COVID-19 containment strategies have disrupted informal economic activities**, especially those involving women and girls, who comprise the most vulnerable categories, because they rely on petty trading, selling food and drinks, carrying loads, hawking goods and begging for alms in markets, border crossings and other public centers. The extant data indicate 'almost 90 percent of women employed in Africa work in the informal sector, with no social protections. Female-headed households are particularly at risk'.⁷⁰ Moreover, the nature of informal economic settings (e.g., working in markets and taking local transportation on crowded tricycles and minibuses) is hardly adaptable to containment measures such as social distancing.

f. Growing Public Discontent

The onset of COVID-19 has also upped public discontent, and this has been visible through demonstrations and protests over the socioeconomic effects of containment measures and broader governance issues in LCB countries. Given preexisting political tensions, the activities of violent extremists, youth unemployment and a general dissatisfaction with the lack of democratic dividends in LCB countries, increases in COVID-19 cases over the short- and medium-term could trigger new protests, including the possibility of 'Arab Spring'-like upheavals. If confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths increase very rapidly in the short- and medium-term, and more stringent lockdowns are implemented, public tensions and discontent



There is a risk of COVID-19 setting off wider instability in LCB countries and territories. Similar to how events, such as police brutality, triggered uprisings in Tunisia, dissatisfaction with COVID-19 measures could set off a chain of events that transcends reactions to COVID-19 measures and leads to wider unrest and protests.

would most likely rise in LCB countries. But if the increases in confined cases and deaths over the short- to medium-term are low or moderate, COVID-19 may not trigger a major political upheaval in LCB countries and territories.

There is a risk of COVID-19 setting off wider instability in LCB countries and territories. Similar to how events, such as police brutality, triggered uprisings in Tunisia, dissatisfaction with COVID-19 measures could set off a chain of events that transcends reactions to COVID-19

⁶⁸ IOM, (2020), "Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis", April 2020.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 2020, p.14.

measures and leads to wider unrest and protests. This could potentially reverse gains made in the stabilization agenda and further worsen the security and stability of LCB territories.

Already, protests have been recorded over poor conditions at isolation centers in LCB countries, though not yet in LCB territories. In Niger on 17-19 April 2020, 108 persons were arrested in Maradi and Niamey for protesting against the COVID-19 curfew and the ban on religious gatherings.⁷¹ The protests had included road blockages, burning of tires, and the burning of private and government properties.⁷² Nigeria recorded public outcry and discontent over inadequacies in the distribution of foodstuffs and a perceived lopsided pattern of conditional cash payment for extremely poor people. It also recorded demonstrations against COVID-19 containment measures in early May in urban centers in Abuja, Kaduna, Gombe and Niger states. In Gombe and Niger states, it was residents of isolation centers who protested poor facilities, threatening to discharge themselves.⁷³ Cameroon recorded a brawl

in Yaoundé over the distribution of rice and other palliatives donated by charitable individuals.⁷⁴ Increases in COVID-19 in LCB countries and territories carries the risk of mass protests over the adverse socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 response strategies, with the risk of those protests expanding to protests over wider socioeconomic, governance and security deficits. Overall, COVID-19 in the context of active military operations in LCB region is reducing humanitarian access, disrupting aid logistics and supply chains, increasing the vulnerability of at-risk populations and communities, limiting human rights and curtailing the cross-border movement of agricultural goods and services.⁷⁵ This has major implications for stabilization; at a minimum, it creates a lag between security and civilian initiatives envisaged under the RSS as government agencies and services are either slow or unable to deploy to areas liberated from violent extremists groups, and, at the maximum, it reduces government resources and capacities for socioeconomic services and recovery over the short- to medium-term.

71 International Crisis Group, 'Niger: Overview', April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

72 GARDA World, 'Niger: Residents in Niamey protest COVID-19 measures April 17-19 /update 3', 22 April 2020, <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/334861/niger-residents-in-niamey-protest-covid-19-measures-april-17-19-update-3>

73 africanews, 'Nigeria coronavirus: 7,839 cases, Buhari on global impact, food sufficiency', 25 May 2020, <https://www.africanews.com/2020/05/25/nigeria-coronavirus-hub-updates-covid-19/>

74 ACLED, 'COVID-19 Disorder Tracker: CDT Bulletins', <https://acleddata.com/analysis/covid-19-disorder-tracker/>

75 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 2020, p.24.

6. Recommendations

The Regional Stabilization Facility

1. Conduct and /or update context analysis, risk matrix and other background documents to align RSF priorities and planning to COVID-19 response strategies in the LCB region.
2. Evolve an LCB (regional) COVID-19 response initiative as an addendum to the RSS by working with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the government of LCB territories, the African Union, regional bodies, United Nations agencies, and aid and humanitarian agencies working in the field. The regional response would be based on coordinated responses among the LCB territories.
3. Develop guidance notes, planning templates and other programmatic resources for integrating COVID-19 into the development and implementation of territorial plans by LCB territories.
4. Analyze and track the differential impacts of COVID-19 and its containment strategies on vulnerable groups such as women, girls and children, including their access to health care, education, and livelihood and protection services. This should be done at regional and country (LCB territory) levels.
5. Enhance communication and public awareness campaigns on COVID-19 to dispel myths, stop the spread of fake news, prevent the stigmatization of COVID-19 survivors, and promote adequate understanding of COVID-19 preventive measures in camps and local communities in LCB territories.
6. Promote a civilian approach to COVID-19 responses to demilitarize the delivery of services to vulnerable groups and promote the integration of human rights protocols in COVID-19 containment strategies in LCB territories.
7. Work with the private sector and governors of LCB territories to facilitate the access of vulnerable groups to virtual services such as banking and finance, education, and health consultation.
8. Ensure the integration of COVID-19 into all RSS territorial plans.
9. Work with relevant aid and humanitarian agencies to accelerate the decongestion of transit centers and camps for internally displaced persons and refugees across the LCB region.
10. Form partnerships with private sector organizations and governments of LCB territories to adapt trading practices to COVID-19 containment measures (social distancing, hand washing, use of face masks, etc.).
11. Facilitate the establishment of a cross-border trade corridor adapted to COVID-19 prevention measures to boost food security, livelihoods and increase the capacity to withstand COVID-19 shocks in vulnerable communities and populations in LCB territories.
12. Facilitate specialist training on COVID-19 for border guards, including effective screening procedures, to prevent cross-border transmission of the disease and minimize the disruption in the supply of livestock, sanitary materials, medicine, food and other humanitarian goods across the LCB region.

Other Stakeholders

For stakeholders such as the LCB Commission, governors of LCB territories, civil society groups, aid agencies, donor partners, private sector organizations and members of the P3 countries (the United Kingdom, France and the United States) working in the Lake Chad Basin area:

1. Promote the use of e-governance tools at national and territorial levels to enhance transparency from relevant government agencies on resources devoted to supporting populations as they cope with COVID-19 at territorial levels. Work with civil society groups to track and monitor COVID-19-related resource allocations and their uses in LCB territories, including camps for internally displaced persons.

Annex 1. COVID-19 Containment Measures and their Impacts and Socioeconomic Mitigation Initiatives in LCB Countries

(with Implications for LCB Territories).

LCB Countries	COVID-19 Containment Measures	Immediate Impacts on Population, Including LCB Territories	Economic Palliatives and Fiscal and Monetary Measures
Cameroon ⁷⁶	<p>Travel bans/restrictions, closure of land, air and sea borders, closure of shops and markets, ban on gatherings of more 50 people, closure of schools, limits on some passengers in public transport, wearing of masks in public, closure of restaurants and bars after 1800 hours, public hygiene protocol (hand washing and social distancing), opening specialized testing centers in all regions (including LCB territories), compliance with hygiene measures (e.g. handwashing with soap and/or use of disinfectant hand gel in public offices), avoiding close contact such as shaking hands or hugging, and covering the nose when sneezing in public places. Measures relaxed after 30 April 2020, but the compulsory wearing of face masks in public was retained.</p>	<p>Loss of livelihoods, reduced access to social and humanitarian services (education and health), disruption of cross-border trade (especially movement of livestock and agricultural produce) in the border region (Gamboru-Ngala border with Nigeria), suspension of lending to small- and medium-scale firms by banks, loss of jobs.⁷⁷</p>	<p>Deferrals of utility payments for three months for vulnerable households and accelerated VAT reimbursements.</p> <p>Expanded preparedness and a response plan for health spending estimated at CFA franc 58.3 billion (US\$100 million); BEAC measures such as reducing policy rate by 25 bps to 3.25 percent, reduction of marginal lending facility rate by 100 bps to 5 percent, increased liquidity provision from CFA franc 240 to 500 billion, and postponement by one-year principal repayment of consolidated central bank's credits to member states.</p>

⁷⁶ "CAMEROON: COVID 19 Emergency: Situation Report No. 1", 18 May 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20.05.20-ocha_cameroon_sitrep_covid-19_ndeg1.pdf

⁷⁷ "CAMEROON: COVID 19 Emergency: Situation Report No. 1", 18 May 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20.05.20-ocha_cameroon_sitrep_covid-19_ndeg1.pdf

LCB Countries	COVID-19 Containment Measures	Immediate Impacts on Population, Including LCB Territories	Economic Palliatives and Fiscal and Monetary Measures
<i>Chad</i>	Suspension of air travel, closure of borders with CAR and Sudan, mandatory quarantine for returning nationals, closure of schools and shops and markets (excluding basic goods), reduced working hours, ban on gatherings of more than 50 people, closure of worship centers, public hygiene protocols in public places, curfews between 1900 and 0600 hours in main provinces (Logone Oriental, Logone Occidental, Mayo-Kebbi East and West and N'Djamena) and declaration of a national health emergency to mobilize human and materials resources to aid the containment of COVID-19.	Livelihood losses, especially for livestock farmers due to closure of the border with Cameroon and Nigeria (via Gamboru-Ngala), and disruptions of fishing activities and movement of fishery products from Lake Chad to Maiduguri in Nigeria. Reduced access to social and humanitarian services, especially in border areas, the concentration of travelers and returnees at border posts, loss of schooling and educational classes, etc.	<p>A national health contingency plan, slashing of business license rates and presumptive tax by 50 percent for small firms, deferral of tax payment, payment of domestic debts to suppliers worth CFA franc 110 billion, temporary suspension of payments of electricity and water bills, the establishment of a Youth Entrepreneurship Fund, food distribution activities, and payment of all benefits to deceased civil and military agents and retirees, and payment of medical expenses to civilian agents and defense and security forces.</p> <p>Others are simplified import processes and tax exemptions for food and health equipment, hiring more health workers setting up a solidarity fund for the vulnerable population worth CFA franc 100 billion.</p> <p>The regional central bank (BEAC) monetary easing measures, e.g., reduction of the policy rate by 25 bps to 3.25 percent, reduction of the marginal lending facility rate by 100 bps to 5 percent, increased liquidity provision for banks CFA franc 240 to 500 billion, and postponement by one year, the principal repayment of consolidated central bank's credits to member states.</p>
<i>Niger</i>	Declared a national emergency and imposed night curfew in the capital city, reduced official working hours, closed national land and air borders, banned large public gatherings, closed schools and markets, and restricted movement between the capital city and the rest of the country, including LCB territory of Diffa.	Loss of livelihoods due to closure of markets, restrictions on movement, and lack of movement of agricultural goods and services between the capital and other regions, and cross-border trade with Nigeria through Diffa. Constrained access to social and humanitarian services (education and health), and the concentration of travelers and returnees at border posts.	<p>Temporary tax relief, two months of free utilities for vulnerable households, and support for agricultural production.</p> <p>The building of liquidity buffers, temporary suspension of convergence criteria, including 3 percent of GDP fiscal deficit, under the regional monetary union (WAEMU), and the regional central bank (BEAC), introduction of fixed rate of 2.5 percent (the minimum policy rate) thereby allowing banks to satisfy their liquidity needs fully at a rate about 25 basis points lower than before the crisis, extended the collateral framework to access central bank refinancing for 1,700 private companies, support for a bank to accept three-month payment deferrals by customers, the use of electronic payments, and 'Covid-19 T-Bills' meet funding needs during COVID-19.</p>

LCB Countries	COVID-19 Containment Measures	Immediate Impacts on Population, Including LCB Territories	Economic Palliatives and Fiscal and Monetary Measures
<i>Nigeria</i>	<p>Lockdown of three states of Lagos, Ogun and Abuja (initial epicenters); closure of land, air and sea borders; closure of schools and universities, worship centers, shops and markets; public hygiene protocol and awareness campaigns on hand washing and use of disinfectant gels, social distancing and mandatory use of face masks in public; night-time curfews and ban on interstate movement; a partial interstate movement of goods and services; and expanded testing infrastructures.</p>	<p>Loss of livelihoods due to closure of markets and restrictions on interstate movements; curfews and lockdowns restricted farming and agricultural extension services, including in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa; closure of agricultural markets and cross-border trade and movements in livestock and fisheries with LCB countries; constrained access to social and humanitarian services (health and education) in the Northeast, and suspension of planned government projects; and the arrests and detention of civilians by police in a bid to enforce COVID-19 containment measures.</p>	<p>Decongestion of prisons, expansion of the social register by 1 million (to 3.6 million) households and the distribution of cash and grains as palliatives to vulnerable households; continuation of school feeding program for pupils in their houses; and reduction of fuel prices.</p> <p>Release of contingency funds (\$2.7 million) to the disease control agency and \$18 million for procuring testing kits; opening and expansion of isolation centers; and special grant (\$28 million) to the government of Lagos state to contain the outbreak.</p> <p>Review of the national budget due to COVID-19 outbreak and the steep fall in oil prices. The introduction of an economic stimulus package worth \$1.4 billion to support health sector and grant relief to taxpayers and support employee retention.</p> <p>The monetary measures include a reduction in interest rates from 9 to 5 percent; a one-year moratorium on CBN intervention facilities; establishing a \$139 million credit facility; liquidity injection of US\$3.6 trillion (2.4 percent of GDP) into the banking system, including N100 billion to support the health sector; N2 trillion to support the manufacturing sector; and N1.5 trillion to support the real sector.</p>



Lake Chad Basin

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Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad



Federal Foreign Office



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

