



CIVIL-MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN COLLABORATION DILEMMAS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

A UNDP STABILISATION POLICY PAPER



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Regional Stabilization Facility Secretariat
Place de la Grande Armee
N'Djamena, Chad
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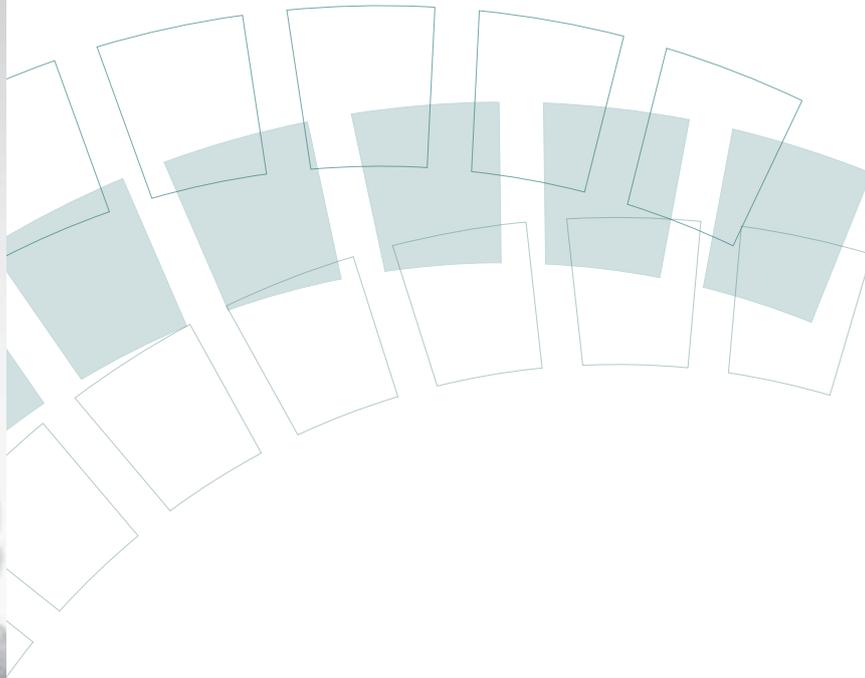
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

UNDP would like to express sincere gratitude to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) for the support and research partnership that led to the development of this policy paper. Our special thanks also go to the Borno State Agency for Coordination of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response, the Borno State Emergency Management Agency, and the Yobe State Emergency Management Agency for availing their time to speak with researcher. The policy paper would not have been possible without their contextual insight and contributions.

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 2020,
THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
FOR THE COORDINATION OF
HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (UNOCHA)
RECORDED AT LEAST

2.6 MILLION

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS
(IDPS) ACROSS THE LCB,
DISPROPORTIONALLY AFFECTING
WOMEN AND CHILDREN



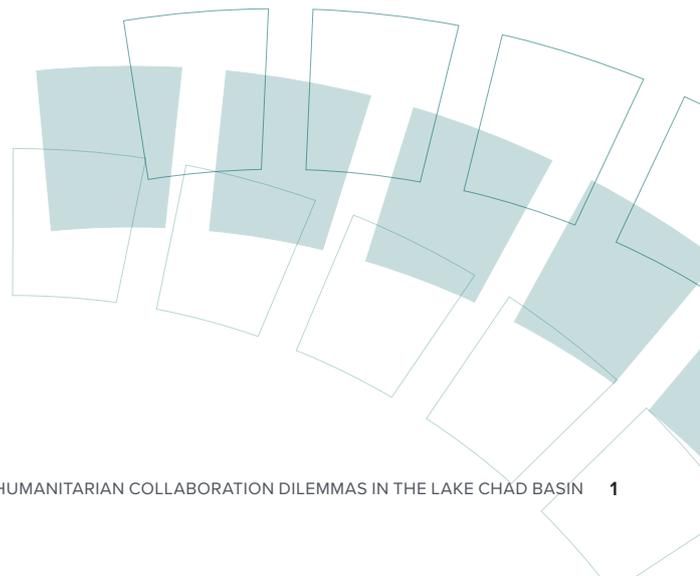
INTRODUCTION

The Lake Chad Basin (LCB) subregion, which covers Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has long endured peacebuilding, humanitarian and development challenges. For over a decade, these challenges have been exacerbated by violent extremism (VE). Boko Haram has fostered insecurity and instability in the LCB resulting in a protracted and complex emergency. Since 2009, attacks in the LCB have led to an increasing number of killings. In the last quarter of 2020, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) recorded at least 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the LCB, disproportionately affecting women and children.¹ Displacement has remained fairly constant amidst the sustained insecurity and disrupted livelihoods linked to persistent attacks by Boko Haram's factions.

State and non-state entities, including local and international actors, have sought to address the situation by developing and implementing overlapping peacebuilding, humanitarian and development responses, even as military offensives have continued. Yet, similar to other contexts, the nexus between the three sets of responses is problematic in the LCB, and multiple stakeholders have recognized the need to strengthen this.² In 2016 the United Nations reform process called for a 'New Way of Working' (NWoW). It emphasized these aspects as three sides of the same triangle, reinforcing the notion of a 'triple nexus' and echoing a similar declaration by global policymakers in Istanbul that same

year.³ Given the multiplicity of actors and approaches, the operationalization of collaborative interventions towards collective outcomes in contexts of VE still poses unique sets of challenges.

Against the backdrop of an intractable crisis, this policy brief analyzes civil-military and humanitarian coordination challenges in the LCB. Emergency interventions in VE contexts raise key questions about the capacity of often competing and selectively cooperative actors to attain optimal and sustainable outcomes in stabilization, recovery and resilience. An increase in the number and type of actors intervening in the LCB has not attenuated the impact of complex emergencies on communities in the region. The depth of the human security challenges in the region, therefore, necessitates civil-military and humanitarian interventions that are contextually adapted, scaled, harmonized and sequenced to ensure the attainment of real, immediate and long-term impacts on affected communities' livelihoods.



THE BOKO HARAM CRISIS: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Since 2009, Boko Haram has engaged in violent attacks, kidnappings and other brutal activities that have destabilized the Lake Chad Basin region. Although the counter-terrorism effort has made progress, considerable upscaling is required to close the gaps, stem the number of attacks, strengthen security capacity and tighten border control. This situation has obstructed and curtailed development in the specifically affected regions in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria against the backdrop of sustained climate-induced or environmental vulnerabilities. What initially started as a violent extremist problem in Nigeria has burgeoned into a protracted and regionalized crisis.

To varying degrees, the four countries have experienced different forms of

insecurity. As of September 2020, 5.2 million people across the LCB were faced with severe food insecurity with at least 500,000 children at risk of acute malnutrition. More than 1,100 schools have been shut due to insecurity, and the overall impact of the violence continues to immeasurably traumatize populations.⁴

Multiple crisis management and resolution interventions have not, thus far, stabilized the region. Neither have they resulted in comprehensive recovery for the affected populations. Indeed, peacebuilding and development in the LCB are fragile largely due to sustained Boko Haram attacks on communities, humanitarian actors and security forces. The violence has caused at least 40,000 deaths, while the number of injuries and the extent of material devastation defy quantification.





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PEOPLE**

faced severe food
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**500,000
CHILDREN**

at risk of acute
malnutrition



**1,100
SCHOOLS**

have been shut

According to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index, the frequency of attacks has placed Boko Haram among the world's top-four deadliest terror groups.⁵

Boko Haram is renowned for its brutality. The group has abducted civilians, committed sexual and gender-based violence, attacked military barracks and killed soldiers, robbed banks, masterminded prison breaks, and continues to use civilians – including women and children – to perpetrate violence.⁶ In fact, between 2013 and 2018 the group was responsible for around 80 percent of global fatalities linked to female suicide attacks.⁷ Sustained attacks on communities and livelihoods have made populations distrustful of the state; in some cases, this distrust has prompted communities to enter into tacit deals and social contracts with Boko Haram to secure alternative modes of protection. In other instances, communities have been forcefully displaced.

Economically, Boko Haram attacks have hampered previously flourishing agricultural activities – particularly fishing, farming and animal husbandry – that are the mainstay of the regional economy. It has affected women disproportionately in comparison to men. A 2019 UNDP report, 'Measuring the Economic Impact of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism in Africa', found that although agriculture has seen the largest reduction in employment contribution for both men and women, women's employment in agriculture decreased most dramatically, from 51 per cent of the female labour force in 2007 to 45 per cent in 2016. Boko Haram attacks have also disrupted pre-existing subregional trade and transport networks, resulting in an increased cost of trading, higher prices of agricultural and other goods, and a loss of income and sustenance for communities and states, among other problems. The same UNDP report indicates that the suffered losses in informal economic activity in Africa between 2007 and 2015 reached

Regional Stabilization Facility for Lake Chad

Geographical target areas



US\$1.68 trillion, and that disruptions to markets and informal cross-border trade due to security measures and violent extremist activities have disproportionately impacted women’s livelihoods and living conditions.⁸

Responses implemented by the affected states, including military operations, have inadvertently impacted communities’ livelihood options, especially as access to particular areas where economic activities are undertaken is limited. Neither have the responses stemmed successive cycles of violence.

The conflict and insecurity in the LCB are linked to climatic alterations across the region. The impact of climate change on an already fragile ecology intensifies existing vulnerabilities and creates new risks, making it even harder to move the

LCB towards stability.⁹ In 2020, floods in the region displaced people from their homes and severely impacted agricultural production, thereby putting communities at risk of starvation and malnutrition.

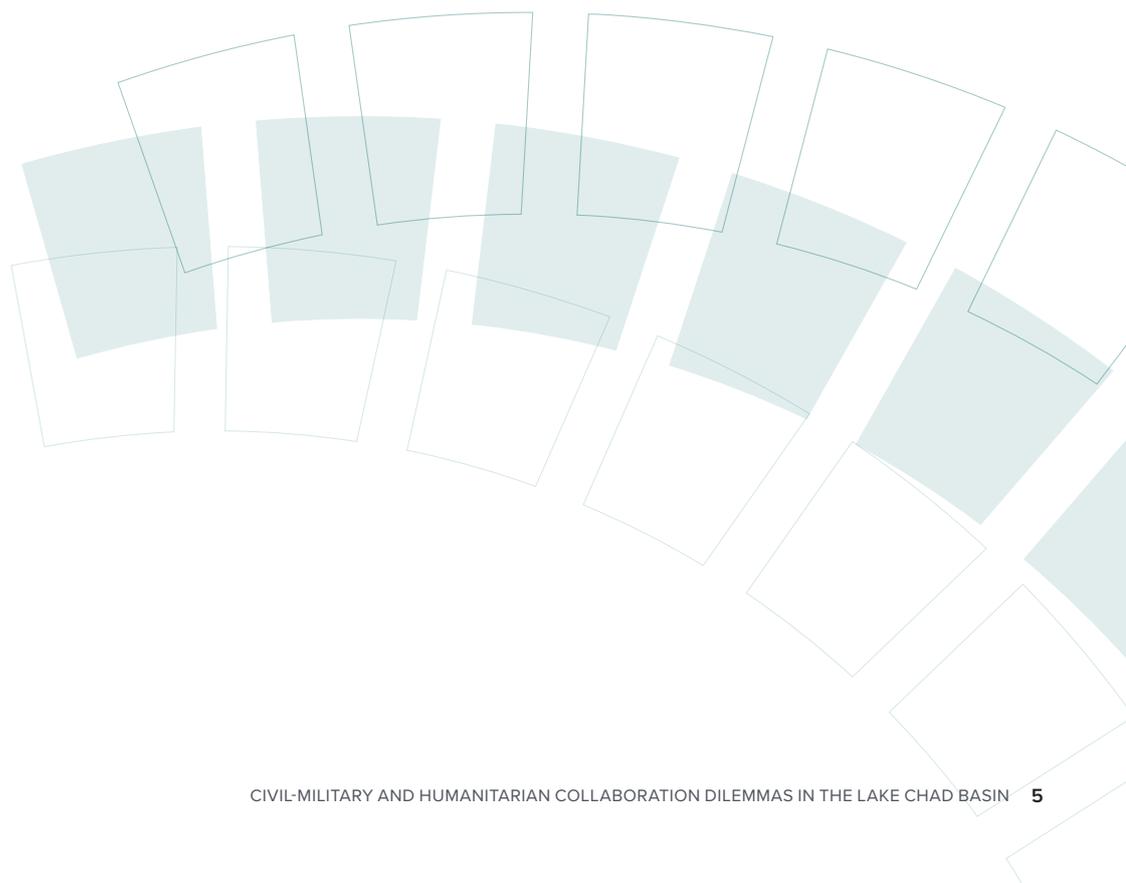
The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has added another layer of risk and uncertainty to the regional crisis. While it has thus far not had a devastating impact, it has accentuated pressures on already limited basic and primary healthcare services provided by state institutions and international humanitarian agencies. Meanwhile Boko Haram has sought to exploit the pandemic in its ideological discourse against communities, states and their international partners.¹⁰ The group has often dismissed sanitary measures by governments and claimed that they were targeted at Muslims to prevent them from

undertaking fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca, among other religious practices.¹¹

Although the LCB is at the heart of the Boko Haram crisis, there is evidence of transnational linkages between the group and other terror groups and/or VE groups (VEGs) across Africa and globally. In March 2015, the then-leader Abubakar Shekau pledged the group's allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). A year later, Mamman Nur, a pioneer member of Boko Haram, and Abu Musab al-Barnawi, son of late founder Mohammed Yusuf, led some members to form a breakaway faction due largely to Shekau's dictatorial posture.¹² Nevertheless, the two factions continue to thrive, despite factional splintering and leadership changes. The two factions utilize, among other methods, extortion of communities and kidnap for ransom payments as ways of obtaining financial resources needed for their sustenance. Decentralized tactics and operations, as well as the conduct of daily attacks in all four LCB countries, continue to shape insecurity, pauperize communities and undermine administrative authority.

Returning to the global connection, ISIS recognized the al-Barnawi-led new faction as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). This faction has benefitted from ideological guidance, propaganda and combat training, management advice and financial support from ISIS.¹³ Interestingly, despite the group's disintegration and the death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2019, ISWAP continues to receive some level of support, especially on propaganda and messaging. These linkages mean that efforts by LCB countries to counter Boko Haram must take into account global trends and lessons.

In 2018, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the African Union¹⁴ adopted the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin (RSS) to address the crisis.¹⁵ This regional strategy aims to support ongoing community-based and national initiatives, which are elaborated and implemented to swing the pendulum from emergency and insecurity to stabilization and sustainable recovery.



**THE WEAK SOCIAL CONTRACT
BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND THE
STATE IS EVIDENCED BY THE LACK OF
PROTECTION AND PROVISION OF BASIC
SERVICES (EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE
AND INFRASTRUCTURE AMONG OTHERS)
WHICH ARE AMONG THE KEY DRIVERS OF
THE BOKO HARAM CRISIS**



STATES AND EMERGENCY INTERVENTIONS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

Human Security in the LCB is the ultimate responsibility of states. This is notwithstanding the critical roles being played by regional and international stakeholders in addressing the complex and interlocking challenges in the region. In a context where Boko Haram has deliberately targeted representatives of the state and its local and global partners, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian interventions run into practical challenges necessitating hard choices. Some of these choices deepen community vulnerabilities and ostensibly benefit Boko Haram, even as states face the double challenge of protecting their territorial integrity and providing physical and socio-economic protection for communities.

The weak social contract between communities and the state is evidenced by the lack of protection and provision of basic services (education, healthcare and infrastructure among others) which are among the key drivers of the Boko Haram crisis.¹⁶ In some communities, the state's presence is barely visible, or the main presence is from Security and Defence Forces. In some areas where it is present, the state and communities face challenges of trust. The crisis, which has persisted over the past decade, has reconfigured communities and altered the security and governance landscape. Boko Haram continues to exploit these dynamics, especially in affected areas, as it provides alternative forms of a social contract while adapting to and undermining governance, as well as military and humanitarian interventions.

By privileging the protection of territorial integrity, states in the region initially prioritized a security-based response as evidenced in the mobilization and authorization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Consequently, states have not been conduits for the balanced development and implementation of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian interventions. Military operations leave unprotected populations in their wake – leaving behind a protection challenge.

Justice and rule of law institutions are, in many instances, extremely weak and unresponsive to the needs of communities, especially when there are human rights abuses. According to the UNDP report 'Journey to Extremism in Africa', deprivation and marginalization, underpinned by weak governance and human rights violations, are the primary forces driving young people into violent extremism. The extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, which led to the escalation of the Boko Haram crisis,

is a key example of how weak justice could exacerbate the insurgency. Similar extrajudicial killings have been reported in Cameroon¹⁷, continuing to fuel mistrust. Additionally, since 2017 governments have struggled to deal with thousands of Boko Haram suspects and have been accused of human rights abuses in some cases¹⁸ including the recent case of the death of ex-Boko Haram associates in Chad¹⁹. These factors have combined to breed resentment and serve as motivation for recruitment by Boko Haram



and other VEGs operating in the LCB. Both actions and inactions by states in the region may lead to these abuses, thereby seriously undermining the ability of the LCB governments and their international partners to foster security and development.²⁰

Furthermore, states' position as parties to the Boko Haram conflict complicates the deployment of humanitarian aid, particularly to communities that are suspected of associating with the

terror group. Communities in Boko Haram-controlled areas and the aid agencies that seek to provide them with relief often suffer stigmatization.²¹ While state interventions have been adaptive and evolutive, they have not been sufficiently scaled and targeted in ways that will address the cross-border dimensions of the LCB crises and effectively degrade Boko Haram.



MAPPING SECURITY, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

The seriousness and complexity of the Boko Haram crisis has led to diverse interventions. Its transnational nature has meant that national interventions have often involved external partnerships. Several state and non-state actors involved in the security, development and humanitarian sectors are either directly implementing or supporting measures to stabilize the region and generate socio-economic recovery and development.

A mapping of these actors shows some similarities but also differences in their agendas or approaches and how they situate themselves across sectors. It also shows that not only do these actors face various challenges independently, but they also struggle to build synergies with their counterparts due to systemic weaknesses. While interventions across different sectors sometimes align, this has not been the case in most instances, and joint approaches remain an exception.

As in the case of promoting human security, states in the LCB are also ultimately responsible for effectively and sustainably addressing the Boko Haram crisis. Yet, there are variations in their prioritization and responses to the crisis. From 2009 to 2014, Boko Haram had largely been treated as a Nigerian problem, although the group's human resource and material connections to neighbouring countries in the region were known. Policy and programmatic measures for preventing and countering VE (PCVE) and ensuring the crisis did not spread to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, only began in 2014. As violence and insecurity spread across the region, countries elaborated and implemented different responses, although they all prioritized military operations against Boko Haram.

In addition to operations conducted by their armies within their territories, states have also collectively carried out joint operations within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Deployment of the MNJTF was authorized by the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2015.²² In countries such as Nigeria, the MNJTF has benefitted from

another actor with deeper familiarity of the crisis terrain—the Civilian Joint Task force (CJTF).²³ There are also other community-based civil defence and hunter groups within the country, as well as in neighbouring states.

Military operations aim to restore peace in areas affected by Boko Haram attacks. However, despite the progress made by the MNJTF, overall success of collective efforts will be contingent upon coherent acceleration and completion by the LCBC Member States, together with all stakeholders, of the second phase of their mandate. This is highlighted in the Strategic Concept of Operations of the Force, namely, to facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programs by the LCBC Member States and Benin in the affected areas, including

the full restoration of state authority and the return of internally displaced people (IDP) and refugees²⁴. To achieve this, the LCBC was tasked by its Member States to facilitate the mechanisms and processes required to consolidate the gains of the MNJTF.

Therefore, states have complemented security responses with developmental interventions, facilitated by regional and international cooperation through the LCBC, used by states as a common platform for a regional approach. In particular, the RSS of the LCBC, supported by the AU and other international actors, seeks to connect local, national and regional scales of interventions to deny Boko Haram a platform for expansion and survival.



The United Nations, which has its agencies playing specialized roles, is a pivotal actor in the LCB. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Food Programme (WFP) have provided valuable emergency assistance to communities since the beginning of this crisis. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supports all four states in managing the migratory consequences of this crisis while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNOCHA also provide humanitarian assistance.

The UNDP, through its Regional Stabilization Facility (RSF) for the Lake Chad Basin region, focus on two key outcomes. The implementation of stabilization interventions aimed at restoring community safety and security, provision of essential infrastructure and livelihood opportunities for affected communities. In this regard, four windows have been established, one each in Maiduguri (Nigeria); Diffa (Niger); Bol (Chad); and Maroua (Cameroon) for implementation. The second focuses on UNDP providing capacity support to the LCBC to implement long term stabilisation, recovery, and resilience interventions²⁵

The World Bank also provides development assistance in the region. It contributed US\$200 million in 2017 and an additional US\$176 million in 2020 to support efforts in the LCB.²⁶ The African Development Bank (AfDB) also provides support to the LCBC through UNDP RSF. External stakeholders are not limited to international financial institutions. Bilateral donors such as Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the EU have also provided funding for the implementation of the RSS and the provision of humanitarian and development assistance.

Furthermore, the LCB is awash with numerous non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) which provide various forms of humanitarian assistance. For instance, since 2017 the Neem Foundation has provided psychosocial services to over 7,000 people in Borno State in Nigeria through its flagship program 'Counselling on Wheels'.²⁷ Therapeutic healing for children is also being provided by various non-state (and also state) actors through the training of personnel in counselling and trauma care. While many of these organizations are domestic or situated in the affected regions, others are foreign. These NGOs and CBOs focus on various aspects of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian assistance, such as healthcare, education and skills acquisition, women's empowerment, youth engagement, environmental sustainability, human rights, peaceful cohabitation, and deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration. These organizations specialize in different terrains in the region and may also deploy aid in partnership with WFP, UNHCR and other international humanitarian agencies. These organizations are important because of their proximity to the communities and their understanding of local dynamics.

Humanitarian activities are also undertaken by private sector entities in the region. In Nigeria, there is the Aliko Dangote Foundation that contributes to the construction of housing units for IDPs.²⁸ Such support is in line with recognition by the United Nations of the critical role of the private sector, as evidenced by the adoption of Resolution 2396 by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2017.²⁹ Indeed, the inseparable link between security and development must be recognized by the private sector, and this presents an ideal entry point for engagement with counter-terrorism issues in the LCB.



In line with their primary responsibility for human security, states also provide humanitarian assistance. In Nigeria, which has the highest concentration of victims of the crisis, the government set up the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development in 2019; this ministry has a mandate to develop humanitarian policies, mobilize partners and resources, and coordinate humanitarian action, among other charges. The country's National Emergency Management Agency and State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) also contributes to relief efforts.

Similar to Nigeria, Niger also established a Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Disaster Management in 2016. This ministry is in charge of developing humanitarian policies, mobilizing partners and resources, and coordinating humanitarian action, among other things.

In Cameroon, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, through the Directorate of Civil Protection, oversees the government's humanitarian activities. At

the decentralized level, the Inspector of General Services, under the supervision of the regional governor, ensures the coordination of humanitarian activities and protection, notably through the military's Rapid Intervention Brigade.

In the case of Chad, the National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees, an interministerial body established in 2011 supervised by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, is responsible for the protection and mobilization of human, financial and material resources for refugees, returnees and asylum seekers. On the operational level, it collaborates with humanitarian agencies and also manages security issues.

However, the creation of these ministries raises questions about whether the role of international humanitarian actors is being duplicated and, perhaps, raises the question of what the future holds for international humanitarian actors. The existence of these different entities (state and non-state) should

rather be understood in the context of them complementing each other and not through the perspective of rivalry. Moreover, the responsibility to address human security needs lies ultimately with the state; the presence of international humanitarian actors in the affected countries should not be misconstrued through the lens of permanence. In other words, their presence, albeit critical, is temporary.

Given the role the state is expected to play in peacebuilding and recovery efforts in the region, it is imperative that it coordinates the activities of all other actors. States collaborate in diverse ways with non-state and international actors in providing humanitarian assistance to communities. The state, which is ultimately responsible for securing the lives and property of people in the region, provides support to humanitarian actors by ensuring their safety and security when delivering relief. The involvement of state entities in humanitarian activities, however, introduces some nuance in the ways in which they interact with state security agencies and with each other.

International humanitarian agencies are bound by the principles of neutrality. This principle dictates that humanitarian actors should not coordinate assistance and interventions with the state security actors, report to them or accept state security escorts. This has necessitated an advanced system of civil-military coordination in which UNOCHA, as the coordinating body for humanitarian affairs,

acts as the conduit for communication between international humanitarian actors and the regional and national security forces. UNOCHA organizes regular civil-military coordination meetings known as CIMCORD. Although the frequency and format of these meetings, which are organized at national and subnational levels, varies depending on the country and context, they are aimed at securing conflict zones for safe movement by humanitarian actors. UNOCHA carries out this activity at the national and subnational levels. This allows humanitarian actors to share with defence and security forces critical information – specifically, the proposed movement routes and locations in which they will be operating.³⁰ In some cases, however, state agencies act as an intermediary for humanitarian actors and the military at the national level. For example, in Yobe State in Nigeria, the State Emergency Management Agency engages with military garrisons and conveys humanitarian security needs to them.³¹

The situation is different in the case of local NGOs and state humanitarian actors. The principle of neutrality also applies to state humanitarian actors in the sense that they do not discriminate in the selection of the recipients for their interventions. However, they are not prohibited from using military escorts to facilitate and secure the delivery of interventions. In Nigeria, the Borno SEMA regularly interacts with military commanders to secure escorts for humanitarian missions.³²

GIVEN THE ROLE THE STATE IS EXPECTED TO PLAY IN PEACEBUILDING AND RECOVERY EFFORTS IN THE REGION, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT IT COORDINATES THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL OTHER ACTORS.



Besides military coordination, agents of the state have increasingly been playing a coordination, regulation and oversight role for non-state humanitarian actors. In the context of Nigeria, the relatively new Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs plays a central role in coordinating humanitarian activities at the federal level. Humanitarian activity is also coordinated at the state level in three Nigerian states: Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The mechanisms for this coordination differ by state, with Borno State having the most advanced arrangement given its position as the epicentre of the Boko Haram crisis. Similarly, Cameroon, Chad and Niger have mechanisms through which agencies of the state interact with humanitarian actors. This mostly happens via monthly coordination meetings as well as larger meetings on a quarterly or bi-annual basis.³³

Similar to the model for humanitarian activities, a wide range of actors carries out development activities targeted at driving stabilization. The UNOCHA and UNDP are co-implementers of the triple nexus paradigm, which means that UNOCHA is in charge of coordinating humanitarian activities while UNDP is in charge of development and peace activities. Under ideal circumstances, a smooth handover will occur from humanitarian actors to those focused on medium- to long-term development, with the aim of restoring livelihoods and reducing communities' vulnerability to conflict. However, due to the volatility of the conflict situation in the LCB, there has not yet been an opportunity to foresee a smooth handover. With no clear end currently in sight for the Boko Haram crisis, development interventions should, nonetheless, be initiated within the conflict situation to restore state presence and authority to secure communities.

Since development activity requires sustained stability, there is more focus on civil-military cooperation between communities and security actors for intelligence gathering and knowledge sharing. The LCBC Stabilisation Secretariat have established a civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) Cell on the national level for Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, as well as on the regional level through the LCBC/MNJTF Civil-Military cooperation cell to ensure civilian oversight. The CIMIC offices interact as needed with the MNJTF on the regional level and with national armies on the national level. This coordination mechanism allows for challenges on the national level to be escalated to the regional level for resolution. It also facilitates experience-sharing among the different offices.³⁴ The humanitarian CIMCORD, led by UNOCHA, deals with interactions between humanitarian actors and the military in support of exclusively humanitarian objectives. The CIMIC cell and CIMIC advisers, under the RSS, facilitate interactions between military and civilian stakeholders in support of the broader stabilization of the LCB as articulated in the nine pillars of the RSS. The CIMIC structure is relatively new and a key component of the RSS. The recognition of CIMIC as a role under the RSS can, perhaps, be understood as a sign that the LCB countries are being guided towards a position from which they will gradually be able to address humanitarian, development and security challenges in the region. The appointment of CIMIC advisors at regional and national levels is also an important and positive development that places at centre stage the concern regarding civil-military interaction, and this will benefit from experience and lessons learnt as time progresses.

CIVIL-MILITARY TRENDS IN THE REGION: COORDINATION AND CHALLENGES

The effectiveness of civil-military coordination is critical given how central it is to curb insecurity, facilitate humanitarian action, and secure development. However, attempts at improved coordination or cooperation are often fraught with challenges. These challenges can be found in the interaction between communities and the military, as well as between humanitarian and development actors and the military.



Community-military

It should be understood that at the initial stages of the Boko Haram crisis, the military bore a major part of the counter-insurgency responsibility. However, with the passage of time, the need for a gradual, but necessary, integration of the role of civilians and communities has become evident. Losing sight of the involvement of the civilian dimension means that local communities already impacted by the insurgency would bear a heavier burden. This situation should, therefore, be appropriately managed, and a programming approach or framework should reflect community and/or civilian buy-in.

Cooperation between communities and the military takes different forms, most notably the creation of the CJTF that has been credited with some of the gains made against Boko Haram since 2013 in Nigeria, or the security and vigilance committees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Residents of affected communities are more knowledgeable of the terrains in which defence and security forces operate and better positioned to locate or identify violent extremists living among them. They can provide valuable intelligence to officers who, in most cases, have little or no familiarity with the language, culture and geography of the areas to which they have been



deployed. Even so, defence and security forces are needed to provide security and protection for communities to avoid disruption of their lives and livelihoods.

Yet, the overall relationship between communities and the military, which ought to be mutually beneficial, is faced with several challenges. These challenges include, for instance, the lack of trust between both parties as well as the punitive action violent extremists take against communities seen to be working with security agents.

That lack of trust between communities and the military goes both ways. The military is suspicious and accuses some communities of aiding and abetting violent extremists who may have roots in those communities and sabotage the military's efforts. On the other hand, communities are distrusting of the military for making such blanket accusations that, in certain cases, result in actions bordering on human rights violations; these include arbitrary arrests and detention, forced evictions and extrajudicial killings. This lack of trust has affected the cooperation between these two categories of actors.

Some of the measures and strategies adopted by the military against Boko Haram have also had unintended consequences for communities, further deepening the mistrust. In an attempt to asphyxiate Boko Haram, the military has tried to limit the group's access to vital supplies by banning human, vehicular and even boat movements in certain areas and during particular periods; these bans that have hampered the transportation and use of certain commodities that are vital for civilian livelihoods.³⁵ For instance, the ban on transportation and solid fertilizer in Nigeria's North-Eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, which has been in place for at least three years, has greatly affected the livelihoods

of thousands of households. The same applies to the ban on the cultivation and marketing of peppers in the Diffa region of Niger.³⁶

Trust between civilians and the military needs to be strengthened and sustained through constant interactions and improved communication. Without trust and the full support of local communities, efforts in the LCB will not succeed. There are instances in which reports about planned attacks by Boko Haram emanate simultaneously from military sources and local populations, but with varying degrees of accuracy. More specifically, some of these reports portray the military as downplaying the violent extremist threat, while contrary sources from local communities reflect communities that are struggling. This is an area (the early warning, alert and response system) that deserves a considerable degree of reconciliation in terms of how information is shared and managed between the military and communities.

Nonetheless, there are some promising practices in this regard; for example a consultative, civil-military approach to security has been supported through the UNDP regional project: *Prevention and Response to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*. In close cooperation with the Governorate of the Région du Lac on the mainland, civil-military community dialogues on violent extremism were hosted in two pilot communities that resulted in the development of 10 practical recommendations to enhance community security. The recommendations were further translated into community security plans.

Interviews conducted for this study revealed that the RSS Secretariat and UNDP PVE Team in Addis Ababa have supported the MNJTF to develop a strategic communication (StratCom)

framework for a prevention and countering violent extremism narrative in collaboration with local communities. The StratCom action plan targets activities at sectoral levels to engage communities and strengthen civil-military interactions and mutual trust.³⁷ It also includes training of the military on the importance of good communication and community relations, which is essential to strengthen communication capacities of the military to engage communities. Initiatives, such as medical outreaches, can emerge from the military's side, and such enterprising ideas can present a platform upon which to build trust with the civilians.

Additional challenges that complicate engagement with the military can be understood in the context of the organizational culture of the military, which differs from that of civilian organizations. In some instances, this relates to the degree to which information is shared by the military, particularly when such information is categorized as sensitive. In other cases, it relates to differentiation in information protocol between the military and civilians within the context of broader military strategy against Boko Haram. From the civilian perspective,

information protocol differs and the military approach to the management of information sometimes does not paint a real picture of the situation on the ground, especially as it affects communities. For example, the military may describe a situation as 'calm' or 'under control', while in fact civilians may be facing exactions, lootings, kidnappings and other violations. This disparate perception and reporting is not unique to the LCB region.³⁸

Understanding the hierarchical character in the military is also crucial for more effective interaction. For example, coordination requests and reporting of rights abuses by military personnel need to be directed both to the right office and to the most senior official charged with the relevant mandate. A misdirection of requests or a boycott of a senior official as a result of a misunderstanding of the ranks can hamper coordination efforts and affect goodwill. There are usually challenges when the military is not clear about the identity and role of a particular civilian actor, and this is especially the case with regard to the different civilian entities involved in the LCB stabilization process.

THE STRATCOM ACTION PLAN TARGETS ACTIVITIES AT SECTORAL LEVELS TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES AND STRENGTHEN CIVIL-MILITARY INTERACTIONS AND MUTUAL TRUST.





Humanitarian-military

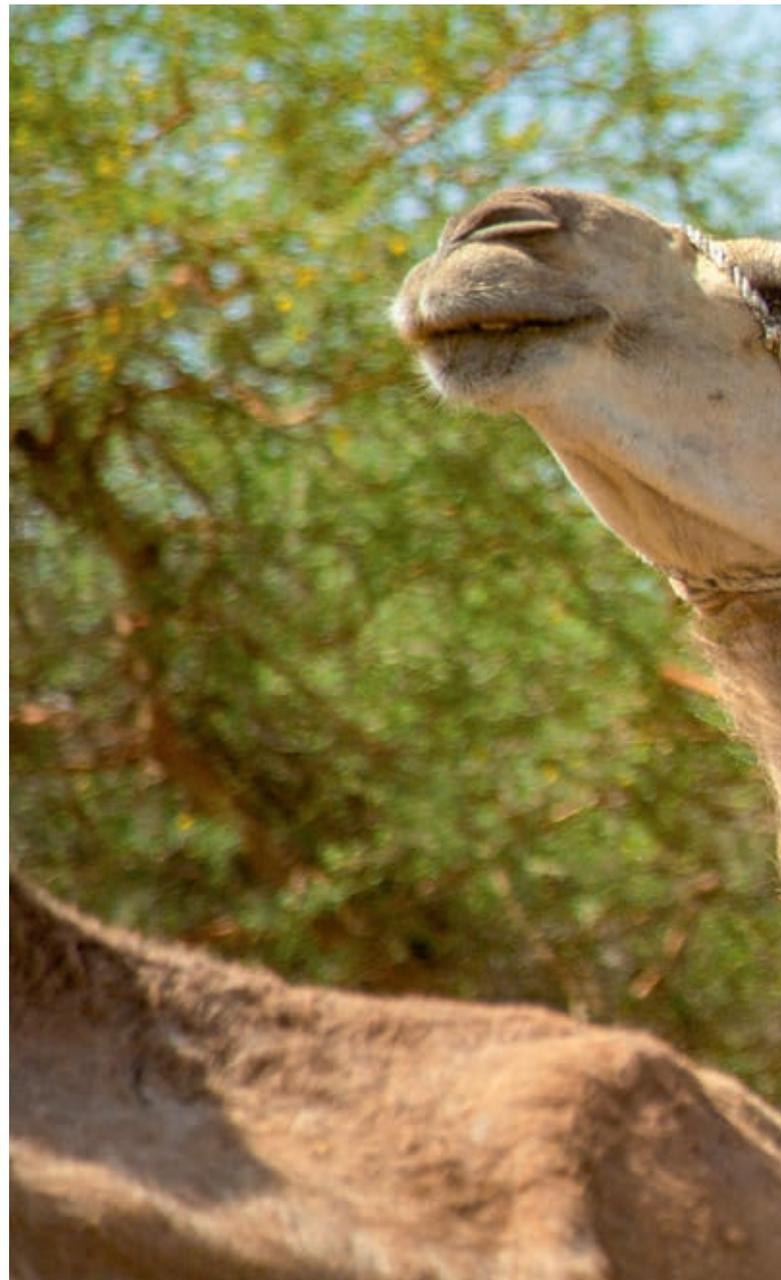
It has already been established that there is a need for strong cooperation and coordination between humanitarian actors and the military. However, this cooperation also faces challenges for both state and non-state humanitarian actors.

In the context of state humanitarian actors, a major challenge with military coordination is the insufficient personnel and equipment available to escort government-led humanitarian missions. This logistical challenge means that a planned single mission with a large volume of humanitarian items to be delivered is sometimes broken down into several smaller missions as the military cannot provide adequate security for a single large mission. This has financial, time and emergency implications. Transporting humanitarian items in multiple small missions increases logistics costs, such as the fuelling of humanitarian vehicles. It also means that missions take much longer than expected because one batch must return before another is transported. The time taken and the reallocation of funds from purchasing humanitarian materials to paying for logistics can result in an inefficient use of limited resources. In addition, due to the time factor, there are humanitarian implications as emergency interventions may not meet the beneficiaries in a timely manner.³⁹

In the context of external humanitarian actors, especially international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and United Nations humanitarian agencies, a major challenge with military coordination is the changing laws or legal frameworks in the different LCB countries. These laws threaten to affect the ability of humanitarian agencies to uphold the principle of neutrality. Nigeria, for example, recently introduced laws that mandate the use of military escorts

by humanitarian actors.⁴⁰ This was part of a wider set of regulations aimed at effective coordination and supervision of the activities of non-state humanitarian actors. Although this can be noted as a positive development, there is the risk that accompanying regulations can counterintuitively shrink the humanitarian space and run counter to the principle of humanitarian neutrality. Negotiations are, nonetheless, ongoing as both sides remain mindful of this anticipated challenge.

On the part of the military, there is also suspicion of the activities of some non-state humanitarian actors. It is already well known that the principle of neutrality is a point of friction between



the military and the humanitarian system. There are, however, wider suspicions that humanitarian actors are aiding the activities of insurgents deliberately or unintentionally. In 2019, the Nigerian army accused humanitarian organizations of aiding Boko Haram with the supply of food and drugs. Some of these organizations were, in fact, ordered to shut down their main offices in Borno State and were declared *persona non grata*.⁴¹ These developments were reminiscent of accusations by the Nigerian military against one of the United Nations agencies when that organization's activities were suspended in 2018.⁴² Such suspicions have, however, been observed to a lesser degree in the other LCB countries.

Banning or suspending these organizations often affects the delivery of humanitarian assistance to local communities, ultimately increasing their suffering and making them more vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram. Nevertheless, these challenges also draw attention to the need for humanitarian actors, and other entities involved in peacebuilding operations, to be cognizant of how their activities are embedded in the socio-economic and security environments in which they operate.⁴³ The need to clarify grey areas in terms of mandates, as well as an awareness of ethics, trust and accountability issues, is critical for the harmonization of multi-stakeholder engagements in the LCB.





Another challenge to coordination is the feeling of instrumentalization by national militaries among aid workers. There are instances where the military directs civilians into controlled and secured areas to ensure safe access for humanitarian actors and assistance. However, there are challenges associated with such an approach, because those outside such areas suffer and are often deprived of humanitarian assistance. In some cases, they are tagged as associates of Boko Haram and denied access to humanitarian assistance. This could result in the co-option of humanitarian actors into a military strategy, because the delivery of aid in such situations might not be based on an independent assessment of needs. As is the case in most conflicts around the world, humanitarian actors claim they treat victims of violent conflict – regardless of whether they are civilians or combatants. But the inability of humanitarian groups to engage with armed opposition groups in the LCB undermines the perception of their neutrality and impartiality, thereby putting their operations at risk of attack from armed groups.

Beyond this, the reluctance of humanitarian actors to use military escorts sometimes leads to attacks on humanitarian convoys that inadvertently supply violent extremists with vehicles and other materials or serve propaganda goals through hostage-taking. As a result of this situation, governments in the four LCB countries are seeking to mandate the use of military escorts by humanitarian actors. Nigeria's passing of laws in this specific regard has served as an example to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as they seek to implement similar steps.⁴⁴ Such laws raise the need for deep conversation and dialogue on the future relationship between state and humanitarian actors in an asymmetric conflict context.

Accepting state military escorts is only a last resort for non-state humanitarian

actors; in accordance with humanitarian principles, being seen as cooperating with the military can further endanger humanitarian groups to attacks from insurgents. Thus, humanitarian agencies are constantly faced with the dilemma related to guarded convoys, and the risk remains of falling prey to terrorist capture for ransom demands, prisoner swaps and use in video propaganda. This was the case when a WFP aid convoy escorted by the Nigerian military was attacked close to Nigeria's border with Cameroon in 2017.

Humanitarian interventions in the communities upon whom Boko Haram preys has put aid workers in the crosshairs of the violent extremist group. Some humanitarian aid workers have been abducted and others have been killed.⁴⁵ Amidst these challenges, humanitarian activities have been further hindered by restrictions on movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, earlier in 2020, these restrictions coincided with a period when thousands of individuals were displaced following a major counter-insurgency operation code-named 'Wrath of Boma' by the Chadian military.⁴⁶ This operation led to a surge in displacements, affecting at least 100,000 people and forcing the relocation of several IDP camps, a situation that added further pressure to an already complex emergency.⁴⁷

To a lesser extent, there are also coordination difficulties between development and humanitarian actors. Indeed, humanitarian actors have arguably been on the ground for a longer period and have been able to set up structures for dialogue with the authorities, as well as a framework for coordinating among the humanitarian agencies operating in the affected areas. Such coordination has also been extended to the military in some cases.

IMPLICATIONS OF CIVIL-MILITARY FRICTION

The implications of the existing levels of conflict manifest in ways that seem to contribute to the prolongation of the Boko Haram crisis. High on the list of implications is the impact on civilians. During the early days of Boko Haram's violence, military operations were characterized by blanket accusations, arbitrary arrests and civilian detentions. This was particularly the case regarding young men accused of associating with Boko Haram. While the group's membership was largely drawn from within communities, security forces had difficulties distinguishing who was a member from who was not. This created an atmosphere of fear among communities and a deep resentment towards security forces. This played into the hands of Boko Haram in terms of recruitment, as many youths joined the group either to get protection from security forces or to seek revenge for their harsh experiences in the hands of the military.

Civilian livelihoods have also been affected by the mistrust between local communities and security forces. The military's ban on dry fertilizer in North-Eastern Nigeria has exerted adverse consequences on farming in a region in which agriculture is the predominant livelihood. There have also been negative effects in terms of lost revenue due to the bans on fishing and the cultivation of pepper in certain zones, such as in Diffa region of Niger. The Boko Haram crisis has already greatly affected the access of communities to land. This ban, which has been in place since 2018, affects people's ability to farm. The long-term effect of this is food insecurity, which millions of people in the region are currently facing. A major case can currently be observed in Nigeria, where UNOCHA projects that up to 5.1 million people in the worst-affected states in the country's northeast zone risk being food insecure in the lean season of 2021.⁴⁸ Significantly, this is the first time since the 2016-2017 period when a famine was close to being declared in Borno state.

As the crisis unfolds on an increasingly vulnerable civilian population, the impact of mistrust continues to surface, especially in remote areas. Part of Boko Haram's strategy is to keep and treat civilians as slaves, including sexual slaves. This is particularly reflected in acts carried out by the Shekau-led faction known as the *Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (JAS)*. Affected civilians are forced to provide labour for the group – farming, fetching firewood and water, among other tasks – and are prevented from leaving.

Escaping may lead to death if caught.⁴⁹ Still, some civilians manage to find opportunities to escape; when they do, they usually seek the military's protection. However, the security forces may be mistrustful and suspect the escapees are, in reality, Boko Haram members. Therefore, a strong screening process is required to distinguish between genuinely repentant former members and those who come out to serve as double agents.

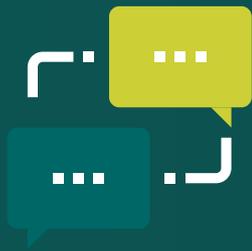
The conflict between security forces and humanitarian workers also results in the inability of the humanitarians to provide much-needed relief services to vulnerable civilian populations. There are entire local government areas and villages that are completely inaccessible to aid workers. An area may be off-limits either for reasons of insecurity, and classified as a 'war zone', or because the military insists that no civilians live there. The use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by Boko Haram is also an issue that could, in the long term, make some areas inaccessible. However, aid workers argue that people are still finding their way out of these inaccessible locations, and they draw attention to the fact that relatives of such people are left behind and unable to escape. The United Nations estimates that 1.2 million people, 81 percent of whom are in Borno State in Nigeria, are inaccessible to humanitarian workers.⁵⁰ As a result, aid workers have noted the need for conducting independent assessments in these locations in order to ascertain the situation from a humanitarian perspective.

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KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential that intervention plans account for the reality of limited and contested state and institutional capacity as both a driver and consequence of conflict and take this into consideration in their design. The RSS Secretariat of the LCBC should take the lead in conducting a clear-eyed assessment of the capacities of the four LCB countries, national armies, local civil society organizations, as well as regional organizations. Such an assessment should also be periodically updated in order to match the fast-paced security and political environment in the LCB. This will allow a follow-up assessment of the opportunities and threats presented by different levels and types of engagement with the state.



Strengthen existing frameworks and put them into dialogue:

CIMIC and CIMCORD cells exist at different levels, symbolizing the willingness of actors to dialogue and collaborate for a harmonious deployment of the different interventions on the ground. In view of the difficulties analyzed in this policy brief, there is a need to strengthen these respective initiatives and to emphasize continuous communication, collaboration and lesson-sharing among them in order to achieve more effective results. There is a need to support MNJTF to improve communication with affected communities across different sectors through more conflict-sensitive military interventions that enhance trust perceptions in stabilization interventions and serve as a profound defence against VE-ideologies propagated by Boko Haram. The UNDP, UNOCHA and the MNJTF are best placed to lead with this responsibility in collaboration with LCBC RSS Secretariat.

A debate needs to be opened on the dilemmas of civil-military-humanitarian cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Despite the existing dilemmas, the actors, regardless of their category and agenda, are acting on the same ground and have, through the RSS, a holistic policy framework that interweaves all the responses proposed by the different actors: security, humanitarian aid and sustainable development. In other words, the RSS makes it more than necessary to harmonize positions and agendas and to sequence actions. This requires these actors to engage in frank dialogue to achieve clear guidelines for effective collaboration and deployment on the ground. The principles of international humanitarian law and the guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will serve as a basis for such guidelines. Politically, the leadership of the LCBC with the support of the Force Commander of MNJTF will be required. This effort should be jointly implemented by UNOCHA.



There is a need to properly catalogue, sequence, coordinate and monitor planned interventions by the different actors in the region and particularly civilian, humanitarian and military entities.

In order to effectively coordinate and sequence these interventions, all actors will have to commit to a work plan that clearly lays out roles and responsibilities. In this regard, coordination between the CIMIC and CIMCORD cells would be helpful in terms of responsibility for these tasks. However, carrying this should be carried out in collaboration with the respective LCB countries. This will reduce the probability of inadvertent replication or sabotage of efforts that may occur as a result of siloed approaches to intervention planning and implementation. Existing frameworks for multi-actor dialogues need to be strengthened at all levels to improve synergy of interventions. This is particularly crucial to build trust between the military and civil society organizations. The convening of actors around a common framework should, as much as possible, have local and regional authorities in leading positions in order to safeguard continuity with implementation. Territorial level interventions, nonetheless, remain a high priority.



Intervention plans must maintain a level of flexibility in order to reconfigure and shift with the changing dynamics in the region.

The conflict dynamics in the LCB are rapidly and constantly evolving, and the delays that arise with a multiplicity of actors will need to be mitigated through improved coordination. For instance, enhanced dialogue between the military, civilian and humanitarian actors can help improve the likelihood that interventions can continue to be deployed in the LCB even in a context of increasing volatility of the security situation. Responsibility for leading the dialogue here should, again, involve the RSS Secretariat of the LCBC, UNOCHA and the MNJTF, but it should also include representatives of local humanitarian agencies. As the context rapidly evolves, effective data management will be essential. Among other things, this provides a point of knowledge reference for the various actors while ensuring institutional memory in the region.



Extra effort should be put into creating community-centred approaches, but these efforts must be monitored after implementation. While the different categories of actors agree with this approach, each takes different pathways that may contradict or poorly complement each other. Interventions often start with a commitment to putting communities at the centre, but poor monitoring leads to other issues gaining primacy over community interests. In the process, the interests of women are often not well represented, and this leads to the loss of vital input that is wide-ranging and gender-sensitive. Community actors, going beyond traditional leaders to also include women, youth and other social groups, should be reflected in subregional consultations in order to bring a diversity of community voices to the table. The military should be a part of this undertaking, as they are a vital part of the overall efforts. A useful opportunity for a deeper engagement of perspectives of civilian, humanitarian and military entities is the LCB Governors' Forum.



External humanitarian and development actors should not seek to replace local and regional state and non-state actors. They should instead design strategies in their intervention plans that bear in mind their transition out of the region. Specifically, regarding the implementation of the RSS, states should take stronger ownership of their development and protection agendas in the affected areas and play a more open role with development and humanitarian actors. Similar to how civil-military-humanitarian challenges are addressed, the latent difficulties that may arise with collaborative efforts between local and external actors should also be analyzed, understood and mitigated. This could include challenges such as external development actors co-locating with public servants in national and regional institutions, a situation that exposes the disparities in welfare and livelihoods. This is an important issue as the 'embedded external consultant' model is often used as one way to increase local ownership and transfer skills. However, when not properly managed, it may create the opposite effect. Radically unequal livelihood packages can create distance between both parties; that may affect the motivation and incentives of local actors which, in turn, affects ownership.



CONCLUSION

The tensions that exist between local communities and security forces on the one hand and between humanitarian actors and security forces on the other, reveals a need and an opportunity to strengthen strategic and operational alignment between and among these actors. Alignment on these levels is critical for the success of stabilization, recovery and resilience of Boko Haram-affected communities in the short-, medium- and long-term periods. The RSS of the LCBC provides a useful framework and opportunity for humanitarian, development and peace actors to work with stakeholders to achieve the long-sought objectives of stabilization, recovery and resilience in the region. However, as this brief explains, the goal of stabilization would need to acknowledge and overcome the limitations that hinder the harmonization, sequencing and operationalization of civil-military-humanitarian interventions. To attain an understanding of how to overcome these limitations, it was necessary for this paper

to first recall the character of the Boko Haram crisis. How the crisis is linked to the shortcomings of the state was also explained. A mapping of the multiple actors, including state and non-state, as well as domestic and external, was done with a view to understanding their agendas in response to the crisis. Areas of coordination but also challenges were highlighted in relation to civil-military interaction, and this was presented along with particular implications for communities. These challenges notwithstanding, some policy directions have been provided in this brief and are not limited to only the interplay between civilians and military actors. Rather, they are situated within the wider context of issues that are certainly not unfolding in isolation from one another. Such is the nature of a crisis that has lasted for more than a decade and that elicits high expectations on local, regional and global actors as they struggle to deliver on their commitments in the LCB region.

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