



Situational Brief | July 2020

COVID-19 and Stabilisation: Governance Implications for the Lake Chad Basin Region



UNDP Regional Stabilisation Programme for the Lake Chad Basin

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Preface to COVID-19 Situational Brief Series

The UNDP Regional Stabilisation Facility for Lake Chad is pleased to introduce a situational brief series focused on exploring the potential and emerging implications of COVID-19 for stabilisation, recovery, and resilience in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). The situational brief series takes the assumption that the spread of COVID-19, including its spread, and the response strategies by governments at different levels have implications for communities, citizens, government programmes and priorities, resources, and capabilities. Experiences from other regions of Africa and the world point to COVID-19 as a ‘watershed’ moment, marked by seismic shifts in local, national, regional, and international realities.

The UN Secretary-General, in his remarks to the Security Council on the COVID-19 Pandemic on 9 April 2020, noted that “the pandemic also poses a significant threat to international peace and security -- potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease.” The UNSG also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to erode trust in public institutions, creates major economic stressors especially for women in fragile societies, and possibly creates or heightens political tensions and turmoil in fragile and conflict-prone societies. It could also provide opportunities for terrorist groups to launch strikes and escalate the threats of bioterrorist attacks that could undermine international conflict resolution efforts, thereby exacerbating human rights challenges.¹

The Secretary-General also issued an initial assessment of the impact of COVID-19 in Africa in May 2020, warning that “while the immediate health impact is still evolving, the indirect consequences beyond health already bring a heavy toll. These include food insecurity, lack of medical supplies, loss of income and livelihood, difficulties in applying

sanitary and physical distancing measures, a looming debt crisis, as well as related political and security risks.”²

Experiences from other parts of the world signpost why and how COVID-19 constitutes a trigger for significant disruption of socio-economic, political, and associational life, and the security dynamic. Put simply, COVID-19 ushers in a ‘New Normal’, a COVID-19 era. Like other parts of the world, the LCB region is not immune to the spread and impact of COVID-19. The multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of the crisis in the LCB region would suggest that COVID-19 and response strategies are most likely going to increase the complexities of the crisis in the region; it could affect and even undermine the priorities, resources, and capabilities of local and international actors, including governments.

The prevalence of COVID-19 in the LCB area and Africa at large is rising, and epidemiological models and recent experiences of other countries and regions of the world point to a rapid acceleration over the coming weeks and months. In LCB territories and countries, the available data point to a steady increase in the number of confirmed cases. The initial

1 See “Secretary-General’s remarks to the Security Council on the COVID-19 Pandemic”, 09 April 2020, available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-04-09/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-covid-19-pandemic-delivered>

2 United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.2 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf

lockdown strategy and the subsequent phased re-opening preferred by LCB states to slow down and manage the spread of COVID-19 continues to have implications for governments and governance, as well as citizens and societies at large.

The situational brief series is intended to trace and analyse the evolution of COVID-19 and response strategies in the LCB states, including areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. It also aims to provide initial rapid analysis and assessment of the implications for priority themes and the overall stabilisation agenda as contained in the Regional Stabilisation Strategy. The situational briefs are also intended to trigger initial reflections and requisite changes in approaches, programming priorities, and potential 're-purposing' of strategies and resources, and the 're-calibration' of capabilities in respect to the stabilisation agenda for the LCB area. Given the disruptions and associated panic occasioned by COVID-19 across the board, the briefs are intended to refocus and sustain attention on the stabilisation agenda in the LCB, in order to align and integrate COVID-19 strategies into the broader stabilisation agenda in the LCB. Finally, COVID-19 is not only about challenges, but it could also represent or present opportunities for rethinking strategies and transitioning to smarter approaches and ways of working. The situational briefs are thus intended to start the process of identifying opportunities for optimizing the stabilisation agenda in the LCB, including exploring ways of adopting a regional approach (RSS) and operationalizing the "New Ways of Working" in a COVID-19 era.

This first situational brief covers governance, exploring how COVID-19 could impact governance issues, especially human rights,

democratic accountability and transparency, service delivery, and market interface in the Lake Chad Basin region, and the implications of this on the stabilisation agenda. The second will focus on the implications of COVID-19 for resilience building in the LCB region, including farming and agriculture, informal economic activity, religion and social support systems, access to humanitarian services, and social protection initiatives. The third brief will look into the impact of COVID-19 on youth radicalisation and violent extremism, including how COVID-19 and response strategies adopted by governments impact youth livelihoods, education, associational life, poverty and deprivation, and the relationship between young people and state authorities. The fourth brief will explore the implications of COVID-19 and response strategies for vulnerable groups, specifically women and girls, concerning Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the LCB with emphasis on rape (criminal rape and marital rape), domestic violence, women's economic activities and effects of poverty, such as prostitution.

Executive Summary

As the spread of COVID-19 unfolds in Africa, its governance and socio-economic consequences will continue to evolve. This policy report is the first in a series of rapid assessments of the implications of COVID-19 and its containment on the prevailing stabilisation agenda in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). It focuses on the implications of COVID-19 and its containment measures for governance issues such as human rights, government democratic accountability and transparency, delivery of services, access to the market, and public discontent. It makes the following observations:

Rapid Rise in COVID-19 Cases in the LCB region

COVID-19 is still evolving in the LCB region. Most of the key Boko Haram (BH)-affected areas are likely still in the early phases of the pandemic. Limited testing for COVID-19 in LCB countries means available data only provides a snapshot of the magnitude of the caseload. As of 27 June 2020, the key BH-affected territories have recorded 828 confirmed cases, 62 fatalities, and 595 fully recovered cases. Borno has the highest number of confirmed cases with 477 cases (58%), followed by Cameroon's North with 122 cases (15%) and the Far North with 89 cases (11%), Adamawa with 73 cases (9%), and Yobe with 56 cases (7%). The confirmed cases in Diffa and LAC are 6% and 5% respectively, and no cases have been recorded so far in Hadjer-Lamis. Importantly, there have been rapid increases of COVID-19 Cases in key BH-affected areas in Cameroon and Nigeria since the start of May. Confirmed cases have increased the highest in Cameroon's Far North (4,350%) and North (916%) regions followed by Adamawa (181%), Borno (103%), and Yobe (75%). The other BH-affected areas in Chad and Niger have recorded little or no increases over the same period.

COVID-19 Coincides with Rising Insecurity

The outbreak of COVID-19 is occurring amidst a deterioration of security in the LCB. Since 2019, the region has experienced rising attacks by and clashes between Boko Haram/ISWAP and government troops. Some of the deadliest attacks by Boko Haram and expansive military offensives by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have for instance taken place between March and June 2020. Boko Haram factions continue to launch attacks such as those against Chadian soldiers in Litri and Bohoma; attacks against civilians in Gubio (killing 81 people), incursions into Banki and Goni, and coordinated attacks against military bases and humanitarian camps in Monguno. Boko Haram is also using COVID-19 as part of its propaganda, suggesting it is a punishment from Allah (God) to the ungodly. Other forms of insecurity persist in the LCB region, including resource-based conflicts such as farmer-herder clashes and cattle rustling, and cross-border banditry.

Shifts in COVID-19 Response Strategies

The national governments of LCB countries initially implemented containment measures. These measures included closure of national borders, offices and other economic spaces, restriction on inter-state/province movements, religious activities and other social congregations, and aggressive social distancing protocols. Testing procedures, public hygiene initiatives, including hand washing, use of hand sanitizers, and public health awareness and education among others have also been implemented. To cushion the impact of lockdowns and suspension of livelihood activities, a variety of economic palliatives, including food packages and household supplies, were initiated. In terms of quantity, coverage, and implementation however, these palliatives were largely deemed as inadequate relative to the demand by the affected population. With the national lockdowns affecting productivity, deepening socio-economic hardships, and instigating rising public tensions, the start of May 2020 saw a relaxation of some of the COVID-19 counter measures.

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 of face masks, large gatherings, and unauthorised movement. Aid and humanitarian agencies in Yobe and Borno in Northeast Nigeria have reported increased operational difficulties since the onset of COVID-19 and the

upsurge in military operations against violent extremists. Such a situation could derogate human rights and the rule of law and could worsen the humanitarian situation in LCB territories.

COVID-19 and Government Accountability and Transparency

COVID-19 raises the risks of transparency and accountability gaps in public expenditure broadly, and specifically concerning COVID-19 spending. The pre-existing poor ratings of LCB countries on accountability and transparency increase the possibility of corrupt practices in procurement of equipment and medical supplies, the payment of fees and allowances to healthcare workers and security agencies, and the allocation and distribution of palliatives to vulnerable persons.

COVID-19 Affecting Electoral Processes

The pandemic is already impacting elections and other democratic processes in LCB countries, including the postponement of planned election-related activities such as voter registration, and local government and parliamentary elections. In Chad, legislative elections scheduled for March 2020 were postponed to 13 December 2020. In Niger, the electoral commission suspended voter registration exercises due to the requirement for social distancing, raising fears 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 elections such as presidential and national assembly elections in Niger planned for 27 December 2020 as well as legislative and presidential elections in Chad scheduled 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 BH-affected areas in the LCB. The twin crises compound the humanitarian situation in the region by increasing the number and vulnerability of refugees, internally displaced persons, and local communities that rely on humanitarian services. While this heightens the risk of infection due to overcrowded refugee and IDP camps, the limited access to camps, and the movement and delivery of services (especially healthcare and food) have deepened vulnerability of populations in BH-affected areas in the LCB. COVID-19 has further disrupted the healthcare system in LCB territories through the repurposing of available human, financial and material resources for COVID-19 at the expense of other healthcare needs, especially for women and children. COVID-19 has also constrained the access to and delivery of education and vocational skills, and the distribution of food in LCB countries.

Disrupted Access to Markets

COVID-19 counter measures in the BH-affected areas in the LCB have also had marked implications on livelihoods. Given the predominance of an informal economy across the LCB, the closure of land and sea borders, curfews, and the quarantine of key economic cities predisposes a majority of the population to economic hardship with implications on the financial resources available to governors of LCB territories. Reduced working hours for banks and offices limit access to savings, and support services for small- and medium-scale firms are absent.. Further, the cross-border movement of persons, goods, and

services, a historical feature of the LCB's specific adaptive capacity to the effects of climate change, is negatively affected. Finally, the pandemic disrupts informal economic activities, especially those involving the most vulnerable categories (women and girls) such as petty trading, food and drinks vendors, load carriers, and hawking in markets, border crossings, and other public centres.

Growing Public Discontent

COVID-19 has increased public discontent and protests over the socio-economic effects of containment measures, and broader governance issues in LCB countries. Given the pre-existing context of political tensions, activities of violent extremists, youth unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with the lack of democratic dividends in LCB countries, increases in COVID-19 cases and/or frustrations over stringent measures could set off a chain of events that transcend the pandemic and lead to wider unrest and instability. This could potentially reverse the gains made in the stabilisation agenda and further worsen the security and stability of LCB territories. In the short- and medium-term, this could trigger new protests.

Recommendations

For the Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF):

- i. Review context analysis, risk log and other background documents to align RSF priorities and planning to COVID-19 response strategies in the LCB region.
- ii. Evolve an LCB (regional) COVID-19 response initiative as an addendum to the Regional Stabilisation Strategy (RSS) by working with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the governments of LCB territories, the African Union, regional bodies, UN agencies, and aid and humanitarian agencies working in the field. The regional response would be based on coordinating responses among the LCB territories.
- iii. Develop guidance notes, planning templates, and other programmatic resources for integrating COVID-19 into the development and implementation of territorial plans by BH-affected areas in the LCB.
- iv. Analyse 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 healthcare, education, livelihood, and protection services across BH-affected areas in the LCB.

For stakeholders such as the LCB Commission, governors of LCB territories, civil society groups, aid agencies, donor partners, private sector organisations, and members of the P3 countries (the UK, France and USA) working on the Lake Chad Basin area:

- i. Ensure the integration of COVID-19 into all RSS territorial plans.
- ii. 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.
- iii. Work with civil society groups to track and monitor COVID-19 related resource allocations and their uses in BH-affected areas in the LCB, including IDP camps.
- iv. Enhance communication and public awareness campaigns on COVID-19 to dispel myths, stop the spread of fake news, prevent the stigmatisation of COVID-19 survivors, and promote an adequate understanding of COVID-19 preventive measures in BH-affected in the LCB.
- v. Partner with private sector organisations and government of LCB countries to adapt trading practices to COVID-19 containment measures.
- vi. 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 the LCB.
- vii. Facilitate specialist training on COVID-19 for border guards, including effective screening procedures, to prevent cross-border transmission and minimise the disruption of the supply of livestock, sanitary materials, medicine, food, and other humanitarian goods across the LCB region.

1. Introduction

This situational brief focuses on how COVID-19 and its containment measures affect governance issues in the LCB, specifically democratic accountability and the rule of law, delivery of services, and access to markets among others. This theme is consistent with UNDP's framing and programmatic templates on governance, Pillar 5 of the Regional Stabilisation Strategy (RSS) and its related strategic priorities as well as the Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF). The assessment covers the scale of COVID-19 and reflects on the impact 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 evolving, with shifting realities in most LCB territories and countries likely in the early phases of the caseload, indicating an uncertain outcome. Current data is difficult to access, and the limited testing for COVID-19 only provides a snapshot of the likely magnitude of the caseload. Therefore, this report also reflects on the extent to which 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 the market by vulnerable persons and communities across the LCB region.³

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 this brief's publication. This is due to 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, suspension or repurposing of government capacities among others. National-level economic slowdown, the loss of revenue, exchange rate depreciation, closure of borders, mobilisation of resources for emergency funds, and efforts to expand healthcare 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 population and communities in LCB territories, especially women, children, and youth. All these factors have implications for the RSS and the ongoing implementation of the Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF).

3 United Nations (2020), "Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa", 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 it has since spread to other Lake Chad Basin territories. Cameroon had its index case on 5 March, while Niger and Chad recorded theirs on 19 March 2020. As stated in Table 1.0, as of 27 June 2020, data from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) 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).

Available data may not tell the full story. Official national-level data points to increases in confirmed cases across LCB states; however, the rates vary with slower increases in Niger and Chad in comparison to Nigeria and Cameroon. For instance, between 7 May and 27 June 2020, the confirmed cases in Niger increased from 909 to 1,100 (21%), and from 519 to 865 (67%) in Chad. Over the same period, the confirmed cases in Nigeria increased from 6,175 to 23,300 (277%) and jumped from 3,529 to 12,600 (257%) in Cameroon. Moreover, the cases per million

are highest in Nigeria (14,500) and Cameroon (2,179), compared with Niger (71) and Chad (13). These national-level data and pictures provide an important context for understanding the trend in LCB territories.

Disaggregated national-level data shows that Lake Chad Basin 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 is the epicentre of the virus in the LCB region. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in North-eastern Nigeria and LCB territories was in Borno on 18 April following the death of an aid worker.⁴ Diffa reported its index case in early May, and the Far North in Cameroon confirmed its first case on 30 April 2020.⁵

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

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

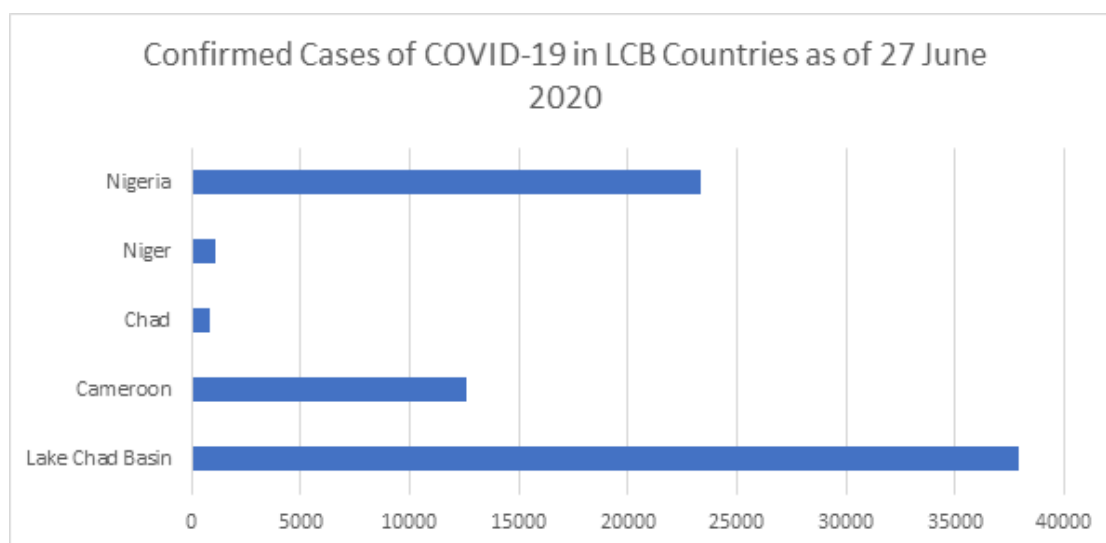
Table 1.0: National Level Data for LCB Countries⁶

Country	Confirmed Cases	Cases per million ⁷	Deaths	Recoveries
Africa	359,408		9,283	173,057
Lake Chad Basin	37,865		1,008	20,102
Cameroon	12,600	2,179	313	10,100
Chad	866	13	74	785
Niger	1,100	71	57	924
Nigeria	23,300	14,500	554	8,300

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>

Figure 1.0: Graph of Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in LCB Countries Relative to Regional and Continental Patterns



As indicated in Table 2.0 and Figure 2.0 below, the three LCB territories in Nigeria account for 606 confirmed cases (73% of all cases in LCB territories) and 46 deaths (74% of COVID-19 death in LCB territories). Borno has the highest number of confirmed cases with 477 cases (58%), followed by Cameroon's North with 122 cases (15%) and the Far North with 89 cases (11%), Adamawa with 73 cases (9%), and Yobe with 56 cases (7%). The confirmed cases in Diffa and LAC are 6% and 5% respectively, and no case has been recorded so far in Hadjer-Lamis.

Table 2.0: 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

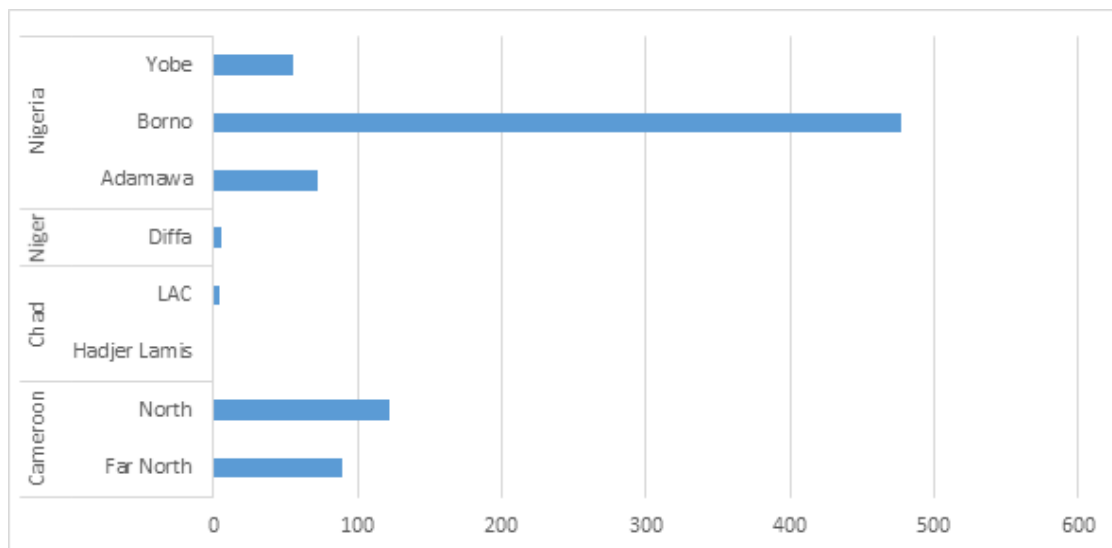
⁸ Data is as of 14 June 2020, see Cameroon: Rapport de situation COVID-19, No. 36, Période du 14 au 19/06/2020, available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/cmr_covid19_sitrep36.pdf

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/>

Figure 2.0: Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in LCB Territories as of 27 June 2020



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 taken place in Cameroon’s Far North (4,350%) and North (916%) regions. Over the same period, Adamawa recorded a 181% increase, Borno a 103% increase, and Yobe a 75% increase. The other LCB territories in Chad and Niger have 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 socio-economic hub of the LCB region, the increasing cases in the territory, as well as in neighbouring 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 refugee and internally displaced camps, border crossing posts, and detention centres. The rising cases of community transmission reinforce this concern and, there are expectations that LCB countries and territories are yet to experience a peak in the number of COVID-19 cases.

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) projections for 47 African countries, including LCB countries, could see records between 29 million and 44 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 83,000-190,000 persons dying of COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic if containment measures fail.¹² Relative to other parts of the world, the WHO projection notes a slower rate of transmission, lower age of people with severe disease, and lower mortality rates in Africa due to socio-environmental 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 prioritised or become ineffective. The WHO Regional Director for Africa observes that “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

12 See WHO, “New WHO estimates: Up to 190 000 people could die of COVID-19 in Africa if not controlled”, 07 May 2020, <https://www.afro.who.int/news/new-who-estimates-190-000-people-could-die-covid-19-africa-if-not-controlled>

taken by many governments in the region. We need to test, trace, isolate and treat.”¹³

Despite 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 since aspects of the response strategies (e.g. lockdowns) were either relaxed or poorly implemented (flouted).¹⁴ 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 UN Secretary-General warned that “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.”¹⁵ Worse still, any rapid increase in COVID-19 cases would be devastating for the LCB territories given the weak healthcare systems and subsisting humanitarian challenges, and the lack of financial resources to cope with high numbers of COVID-19 cases.¹⁶



13 Ibid.

14 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 increased number of tests carried out daily.

15 United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.2.

16 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 prepared on all indices except for mobile phone subscription per 100, and nurses and midwives for 10,000. See, United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.9.

3. Overview of the Security Situation Since the COVID-19 Outbreak

Since 2015, the LCB region has been an active military-security zone. The complexity associated with this status quo has been complicated further by responses to COVID-19, including measures taken to limit its spread and corresponding suffering of civilians and communities.¹⁷ In response to the steady deterioration of the security of the LCB in the months before the outbreak of COVID-19 the LCB countries launched new military offensives at the end of April 2020.¹⁸ As indicated in Figure 3, there has been a shift in Boko Haram attacks from within, to outside Nigeria since 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 attacks against a Chadian military base on the Bohoma Peninsula, LAC Province in Chad that killed nearly 100 troops.¹⁹ Clashes between Chadian troops and Boko Haram fighters are estimated to have tripled in 2019.²⁰

The outbreak of COVID-19 in the LCB region, therefore, coincided with increased security activities by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Chad, Niger and Nigeria launched significant 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 a 'war zone' and undertook military operations to dislodge violent extremist groups, and, according to the Chadian military, killed over 1,000 violent extremists during the operation.²¹ In Niger's Diffa region, security forces in cooperation with the regional force MNJTF, launched a new military offensive to disrupt and dislodge violent extremist groups from the islands of Lake Chad.²² 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.²³

17 United Nations (2020), "Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa", p.21.

18 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>.

19 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>

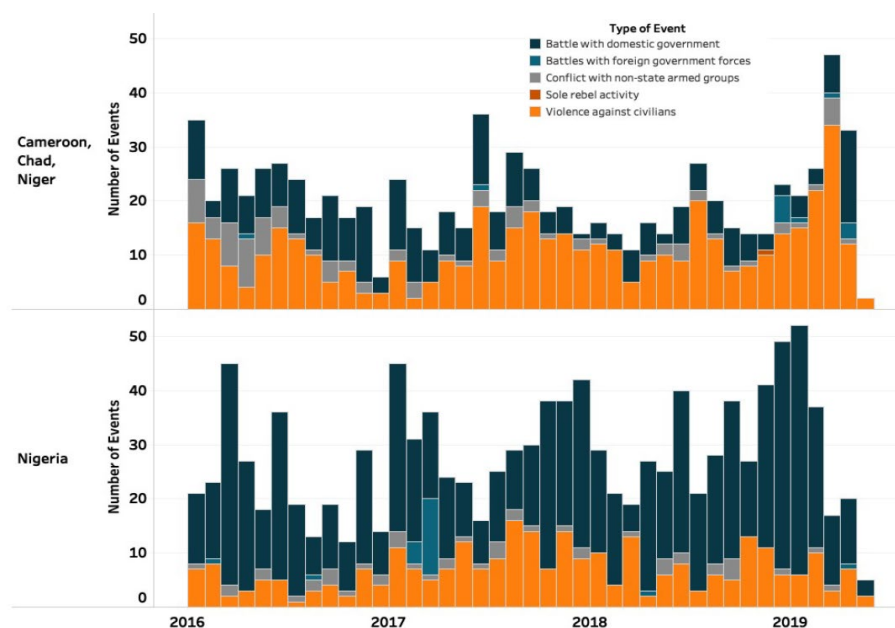
20 See Eizenga, D. (2020), "Chad's Escalating Fight against Boko Haram", African Centre for Strategic Studies, 20 April 2020, <file:///C:/Users/k1469895/Downloads/africacenter.org-Chads%20Escalating%20Fight%20against%20Boko%20Haram.pdf>

21 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>

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

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

Figure 3.0: Violent Activity Involving Boko Haram by Type of Event and Location (1 January 2016 – 11 May 2019)



Source:

ACLED: "No Home Field Advantage: The Expansion of Boko Haram's Activity Outside of Nigeria in 2019"²⁴

24 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 recent and ongoing military offensives against violent extremist groups, high and low-intensity security challenges persist in the LCB region. On the one hand, violent extremist groups continue to launch attacks such as 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 stepped up attacks in June 2020, including attacks against civilians in Gubio (killing 81 people),²⁵ 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 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.²⁶ 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 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 the recording. "We have anti-virus while you are infected with the coronavirus, we have anti-coronavirus."²⁷

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

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

27 See Campbell, J. (2020), "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>

On the other hand, other forms of insecurity persist in the LCB region, including resource-based conflicts such as farmer-herder clashes and 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 Centre province and farmer-herder clashes in Chad's Mayo-Kebbi East province.²⁸ 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."²⁹



In Adamawa (Lamurde local government area), recent farmer-herder clashes (May 2020) have led to 73 fatalities, and the displacement of communities with an estimated 81,110 persons in need of humanitarian assistance.³⁰ Resource-based conflicts could, therefore, increase in the context of socio-economic hardships arising from COVID-19 in the LCB region.

The combination of COVID-19, measures taken to limit its spread, and the increased tempo of security operations in the LCB region since March 2020 continue to have major effects on civilians and local communities.³¹ These include 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 (30% 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 authorisation 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."³²

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

29 Ibid.

30 See "Stemming recurring herders/farmers clashes", Sunnews Online, 07 June 2020, <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/stemming-recurring-herders-farmers-clashes/>

31 IOM, (2020), "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>

32 Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Army Restrictions Stifling Aid Efforts", 04 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. All LCB countries have responded with varied measures designed to suppress and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by limiting the spread of the virus in 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, restriction on inter-state/province movements, closure of air, land and sea borders, the 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, including hand washing, use of hand sanitizers, and public health awareness and education, have also been implemented. In response to the economic consequences of the COVID 19 counter measures, a variety of economic palliatives, including food packages and household supplies, were also been initiated to cushion the impact of lockdowns and suspension of livelihood activities. At the macroeconomic level, governments of LCB states introduced macro-economic measures, including fiscal and monetary adjustments to repurpose funds, including raising funding for COVID-19 response activities, and re-planned national budgets, given the expected economic slowdown (recession) during and after COVID-19.

However, by the beginning of May, there was evidence that the national governments of LCB countries had started to switch to addressing the macro-economic impacts of COVID-19 through the introduction of aggressive fiscal and monetary measures, as well as containing the rising social tensions and anger arising from the lockdown measures. In some LCB countries, discontent was rising among citizens due to economic hardships caused by the lockdown, including hunger, food insecurity (impact on the planting season), job losses, and the collapse of small and medium scale business.³³ 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 livelihoods activities (farms and markets).³⁴ The lockdown measures, including border closures, impacted cross-border trade and movement of livestock and fisheries, including cattle from Chad through Cameroon's Gaboru-Ngala border with Nigeria; the movement of fishery products around Lake Chad and to major cities in Nigeria; and led to a concentration of stranded travellers and border posts.

The pro-poor palliatives introduced by the government 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

33 "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

34 "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

sustaining the containment measures (especially the closure of markets) over a long period. It is even more challenging across the LCB where the majority of the population derive their livelihoods from the informal sector, and where and it would always be problematic to observe social distancing in densely populated city markets and internally displaced camps.³⁵ Much of the socio-economic palliatives introduced by the national governments in LCB countries began by the end of April. In Nigeria for instance, a phased and gradual easing of lockdown measures was approved from 4 May 2020, though a national overnight curfew, ban on inter-state travel and controlled interstate movement of goods and services, and mandatory use of face masks in public was retained. Similar relaxation of containment measures took place in Cameroon but the wearing of face masks in public was retained.³⁶



35 OXFAM, (2018). '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>

36 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 of COVID-19 on governance is the potential and actual instances of a rise in the use of arbitrary powers, including arrests and detentions in the enforcement of containment measures. The lockdowns imposed by LCB countries give extra-judicial powers to security agencies to arrest citizens suspected of flouting measures such as wearing of face masks, attending large gatherings, and unauthorised movements. The deployment of soldiers and armed police and other paramilitaries raise the risk and actual cases of lethal force being used to enforce COVID-19 measures such as restriction on the freedom of movement, worship, and association.

There are empirical pointers in this regard. In Cameroon for instance, the police detained hundreds of people for unauthorised movement and /or failure to wear face masks, seized 250 motorcycles and impounded hundreds of taxis,³⁷ and arrested six opposition activists in Yaoundé for distributing face masks and hand sanitizer gels in public.³⁸ In Nigeria, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported the receipt of 105 complaints of human rights violations by authorities during the lockdown, including at least 18 extra-judicial killings (between 30 March and 13 April 2020).³⁹ The closure of offices and reduced operations by major government agencies such as police stations, courts and prisons also points to delays of

judicial proceedings, a backlog of cases (delay of justice), and increased overcrowding of cells and detention facilities in LCB countries.

It is also the case that the outbreak of COVID-19, response strategies, and worsened socio-economic hardships across LCB countries have impacted the human rights and civil liberties of women and girls, especially with regards to sexual- and gender-based violence. This will be addressed further in the fourth situational brief on COVID-19 and SGBV in the 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 inter-city/region travel initially suspended (and later extended) for two weeks at the start of April, with only vehicles carrying goods allowed to enter towns between 2200 hours and 0500 hours daily.⁴⁰ In April, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported that over 2,500 returnee migrants (including 1,100 Chadian students), were stranded at transit centres in border areas of Niger, Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Niger later approved

37 "Cameroon Arrests People Without Masks as COVID-19 Cases Increase", VOA News 14 May 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/cameroon-arrests-people-without-masks-covid-19-cases-increase>

38 Coronavirus: Cameroon arrests six opposition activists for distributing face masks, The Levant News, 15 May 2020, <https://thelevantnews.com/en/2020/05/coronavirus-cameroon-arrests-six-opposition-activists-for-distributing-face-masks/>

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

40 Chad begins coronavirus lockdown amid lack of Covid-19 testing", RFI, 08 May 2020, <http://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200508-chad-begins-coronavirus-lockdown-amid-lack-of-covid-19-testing>

a humanitarian corridor for moving migrants in IOM transit centres across the territory pending authorisation from countries of origin.⁴¹ 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 is blamed on new operational licensing requirements and restrictions on movements by military and civilian authorities.⁴²

The derogation of human rights laws and international humanitarian conventions worsens the humanitarian situation in LCB territories. A humanitarian snapshot by UN OCHA at the end of April 2020 revealed that over 2.7 million people have fled their homes, are suffering from physical and emotional strain, and lacking shelter, food, and adequate access to clean water, hygiene, and basic sanitary conditions that 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; it expects the number of food-insecure persons to increase from 3.6 million to 4.6 million by the lean season of 2020, even without the effect of COVID-19.⁴³

b. Government Accountability and Transparency Issues

COVID-19 raises the risk and further exacerbates transparency and accountability gaps in public expenditure broadly, and specifically concerning COVID-19 spending. The pre-existing poor ratings of LCB countries on accountability and transparency indices increase the possibility of corrupt practices in procurement of equipment and medical supplies; the payment of fees and allowances to healthcare workers and security agencies; and the allocation and distribution of palliatives to vulnerable persons. There is also the fear that the projected new (additional) health spending of \$10.6 billion in Africa could increase the risk of corruption in COVID-19 responses.⁴⁴ Financial integrity and accountability in the use of COVID-19 emergency funds, debt forbearance, and borrowing will be key to the effectiveness of healthcare services and socio-economic recovery in LCB countries and territories.⁴⁵

Publicly available data is scarce on the use of COVID-19 resources in LCB territories at the time of writing this report, but the national-level dynamic of LCB countries makes this an important concern. As indicated in Tables 3.0 and 4.0 below, LCB states are outside of the top performers in the rating of African countries on good governance (transparency and accountability) and anti-corruption. In 2019, Niger was ranked 24, Nigeria ranked 33, Cameroon ranked 36, and Chad ranked 46 on governance in Africa by the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG).

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

42 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>

43 UN OCHA (2020), "Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 27 April 2020)", <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-27-april-2020>.

44 UNECA (2020), "COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies", p. 3, <https://www.uneca.org/publications/covid-19-africa-protecting-lives-and-economies>

45 UNECA (2020), "COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies", p. 13. See also The Conversation, "Coronavirus: corruption in health care could get in the way of Nigeria's response", May 4, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-corruption-in-health-care-could-get-in-the-way-of-nigerias-response-136913>

The LCB countries also ranked low in corruption perception rankings in 2019; 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.⁴⁶ These issues inform the inclusion of transparency requirements in Nigeria's access to its \$3.4 billion contributions to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 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.⁴⁷

Table 3.0: Transparency and Accountability Rating of LCB Countries in 2019

	Rank	Overall Governance Score (out of 100)	Transparency and Accountability Score
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 2019*⁴⁸

Table 4.0: Corruption Perception Index of LCB Countries 2019

	Corruption Perception 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 2019*⁴⁹

46 UNECA (2020), "COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies", p. 14.

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

48 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>

49 Transparency International (2019), "Corruption Perception Index 2019", https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019_CPI_Report_EN_200331_141425.pdf

c. Postponement of Elections

The climate of national emergencies in LCB countries has direct governance-related consequences, including issues of elections and democratic governance, in LCB territories. The emergency context reduces the space and capacities of civil society's monitoring and advocacy initiatives in 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 cases of COVID-19 accelerate over the medium- to long-term.

More importantly, COVID-19 could and is already impacting elections and other democratic processes in LCB territories. COVID-19 and subsequent response measures increase the risk of suspension or postponement of planned election-related activities such as voter registration, local government and parliamentary elections. In Chad, legislative elections planned for March 2020 have been postponed to 13 December 2020. This is the latest in a series of election postponements since 2015.⁵⁰ 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 2020.⁵¹

Going forward, increasing cases of COVID-19 infections over the short- and medium-term will put question marks (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 will also change the way elections are organised, as the voting and result collection processes will have to be adapted to COVID-19 prevention measures. This will lead to additional costs and logistical burden for organising elections where issues of inadequate resources (costs) have already been cited as a reason for the postponement of legislative elections in Chad 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 further lengthen voting turnaround time while requiring the use of face masks.

d. Reduced Access to Services and Service Delivery

The inter-section of the COVID-19 pandemic (and containment measures), increased tempo of security activities and economic downturn in the LCB region (territories) since March 2020 have further complicated 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 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 increased the 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, increasing the resource requirements for

50 See Garda World, "Chad: Legislative elections to be held on December 13 /update 3", 03 April 2020, <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/328896/chad-legislative-elections-to-be-held-on-december-13-update-3>

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

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.”⁵²

Furthermore, COVID-19 also restricts access to camps, and the movement and delivery of services (especially healthcare and food). It also heightens the risk of infection due to overcrowded and insecure refugee and IDP camps, and the closure of border posts (stranded travellers and returnees). Some of the over-crowded camps include those in Banki in Bama Local Government Area (LGA) and Ngala in Gamboru-Ngala LGA on the Nigerian-Cameroon border, although UNCHR is working to decongest them.⁵³ The containment measures have left more than 10,000 migrants stranded at border posts or transit centres across the LCB region, and the lack of social distancing and basic hygiene facilities in these centres raises fears of COVID-19 transmissions.⁵⁴ It is also estimated that recent military operations and COVID-19 containment displaced over 20,000 people living on the Lake Chad islands with limited access to food and basic services, and vulnerable to safety and health risks.⁵⁵

Second, **COVID-19 has disrupted the healthcare system** in LCB countries and territories through the repurposing of available human, financial, and material resources for COVID-19 at the expense of other healthcare 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 healthcare needs, especially for landlocked LCB countries (Niger and Chad). In Chad, the COVID-19 outbreak has led to a drop in measles vaccinations, leading to a rise in measles cases.⁵⁶ In Cameroon and Chad, COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses and challenges of the health sector, including the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), lack of tests, and poor screening and testing procedures (especially at entry points), ventilators, limited hospitalisation capacity, and disruption of medical supply chains because of border closures.⁵⁷

To this extent, COVID-19 has exposed and further weakened the delivery of healthcare in LCB countries and territories. The COVID-19 pandemic has also laid bare the lack of medical personnel, support equipment, respirators, testing kits, and PPE, and the inadequate funding to match immediate needs. In Niger, 143 health workers (19% of total confirmed cases) were affected as at early May 2020, with a negative impact on treatment capacities.⁵⁸ In Chad, 30 of the 117 confirmed COVID-19 cases at the end of April were medical personnel.⁵⁹ In Nigeria, around 6% (113) of confirmed COVID-19 cases

52 See USAID (2020) “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>

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

54 OM, (2020), “Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis”, April 2020.

55 Ibid

56 OCHA, “CHAD: Situation Report: 22 May 2020”, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/chad>

57 “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

58 See 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>

59 Chad: 30 medical staff contract COVID-19, Africanews.com, 05 May 2020, <https://www.africanews.com/2020/05/05/chad-30-medical-staff-contract-covid-19/>



were medical personnel at the start of May.⁶⁰ In fact, on 18 April, Borno witnessed the death of a healthcare worker deployed by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) who had no history of travel outside of Borno and worked in a displacement camp in Pulka, on the border with Cameroon. This heightened fear among aid workers and raised strong suspicions of community transmission in IDP and refugee camps.⁶¹

Third, **COVID-19 has constrained the access to and delivery of education and vocational skills** in LCB countries and territories. This compounds the pre-COVID-19 situation in which over 1,000 schools were already closed with teachers being abducted or killed due to insecurity. In May 2020, the UNCHR noted that the closure of schools was impacting 140 million children across West and Central Africa.⁶²

The UNSG also noted the difficulties of online access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa because close to 90% lack access to household computers, 82% lack online connections, over 8.5 million teachers are unable to learn or teach from home, and around 56 million live in areas that are not served by mobile networks.⁶³ In border areas of Cameroon and Chad, especially those hosting refugee camps, UNCHR and UNICEF are working to support government education ministries to establish distance learning through radio, telephone, television and online means, and distribution of school work packages to the most vulnerable pupils. However, “only 20% of refugee-hosting areas can access a radio signal and alternative methods are in place to ensure the continuity of education.”⁶⁴

60 “Nigeria: 113 healthcare workers infected with COVID-19”, AA News, 01 May 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-113-healthcare-workers-infected-with-covid-19/1825398>

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

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

63 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

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

Finally, **COVID-19 has disrupted food distribution**, and overall aid sector logistics and supply chains. The restrictions introduced due to the upsurge in security activities by the military and enforced lockdowns by COVID-19 combine 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 clearances (permits) and escorts, and to the institution of new crowd management protocols. It is feared that this threatens the delivery of services to roughly 800,000 internally displaced people scattered in 229 congested camps throughout Borno State.⁶⁵

e. **Disrupted Access to Market**

The continuous spread of COVID-19 and its subsequent 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, curfews, and the imposition of quarantine in key economic cities, the overall economic slowdown will impact the access of populations and local communities in LCB territories 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 critical sectors of the economy in LCB territories.** Disrupted international trade, the collapse of oil and commodity prices, and reduced government revenues have major negative impacts on livelihoods and national economic growth (recession). The UN Economic Commission for Africa estimates the effects of COVID-19 to include the reduced inflow of foreign direct

investments and remittances, increased capital flight, tightening of domestic financial markets, currency exchange rate depreciation, and a decline in economic growth with a 1.4% point reduction in economic growth (from 3.2% to 1.8% based on March 2020 estimates).⁶⁶ This could deprive “19 million people of their livelihoods and, in the context of weak social protection programmes in Africa, push up to 29 million more people into poverty.”⁶⁷ For example, Nigeria is projected to lose \$14-19 billion in oil revenues and an increase in fiscal deficit to -2.6% of GDP and debts rising to 55.8% of GDP.⁶⁸ 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. This will impact their capacity to meet social service obligations, as well as reduce their scope to implement stabilisation and recovery plans 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 the 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.⁶⁹ This could also trigger the loss of jobs in the banking and financial service industry among locals.

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

66 UNECA (2020), “COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies”, p. 3.

67 United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.15.

68 UNECA (2020), “COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies”, pp.6 & 13.

69 United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.10.

Third, **COVID-19 directly impacts 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.**

The closure of key border posts, especially the strategic Gamboru-Ngala crossing that connects and facilitates socio-economic exchanges between Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria, affects the livelihoods and seasonal movement of labour and livestock. The closure of official border posts usually triggers attempts by small-scale traders to explore unofficial crossing points thereby facing exposures to illegal payment of taxes (bribes) and the risk of robberies.⁷⁰ Expectedly, the landlocked nature of Chad and Niger and the reliance on Cameroon and Nigeria for port access means additional economic hardships and vulnerability (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 the resumption of border crossings will pose sanitary risks without pre-emptive measures such as adequate screening and testing, or isolation facilities.⁷¹

Fourth, **COVID-19 containment strategies have disrupted informal economic activities,** especially those involving the most vulnerable categories (women and girls) such as petty trading, food and drinks vendors, load carriers, hawking, and beggars in markets, border crossings, and other public centres. The extant data which points to “almost 90% of women employed in Africa work in the informal sector, with no social protections, [and] female-headed households are, particularly

at risk.”⁷² Moreover, the nature of informal economic settings, such as markets, and local transportation on crowded tricycles and mini-buses, is hardly adaptable to containment measures such as social distancing.

f. Growing Public Discontent

The onset of COVID-19 has also upped public discontent manifesting in demonstrations and protests over the socio-economic effects of containment measures, and broader governance issues in LCB countries. Giving pre-existing political tensions, activities of violent extremists, youth unemployment, and 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 will most likely rise. 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.

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 transcend reactions to COVID-19 measures and lead to wider unrest and instability. This could potentially reverse gains made in the stabilisation agenda and further worsen the security and stability of LCB territories.

Already, protests have been recorded over poor conditions at isolation centres in LCB

70 OM, (2020), “Background Brief on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Amid COVID-19 Crisis”, April 2020.

71 Ibid.

72 United Nations (2020), “Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa”, p.14.

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.⁷³ The protests included road blockages, burning of tyres, and burning of private and government properties.⁷⁴ Nigeria recorded public outcries and discontent over inadequacies in the distribution of foodstuff and perceived lopsided patterns of conditional cash payments for extremely poor people. It also recorded demonstrations against COVID-19 containment measures in early May in urban centres in Abuja, Kaduna, Gombe, and Niger states. In Gombe and Niger states, residents of isolation centres protested poor facilities, threatening to discharge themselves.⁷⁵

Cameroon recorded a brawl in Yaoundé over the distribution of rice and other palliatives donated by charitable individuals.⁷⁶ Increases in COVID-19 in LCB countries and territories carries the risk of mass protests over the adverse socio-economic effects of COVID-19 response strategies, with the risk of expanding to protests over wider socio-economic, governance and security deficits.

Overall, COVID-19 in the context of active military operations in the LCB region is reducing humanitarian access, disrupting aid logistics and supply chains, increasing the vulnerability of at-risk population and communities, limiting human rights, and curtailing the cross-border movement of agricultural goods and services.⁷⁷ This has

major implications for stabilisation. At best, it may create 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 extremist groups. In the worst case, it may reduce government resources and capacities for socio-economic services and recovery over the short- to medium-term.



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

74 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>

75 Africa News, "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/>

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

77 United Nations (2020), "Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa", p.24.

Recommendations

The Regional Stabilisation Facility

- ii. Conduct and /or update its context analysis, risk matrix and other background documents to align RSF priorities and planning to COVID-19 response strategies in the LCB region.
- iii. Evolve an LCB (regional) COVID-19 response initiative as an addendum to the RSS by working with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the governments of LCB territories, the African Union, regional bodies, UN agencies, and aid and humanitarian agencies working in the field. The regional response would be based on coordinating responses among the LCB territories.
- iv. Develop guidance notes, planning templates, and other programmatic resources for integrating COVID-19 into the development and implementation of territorial plans by LCB territories.
- v. Analyse and track the differential impacts of COVID-19 and its containment strategies on vulnerable groups such as women and girls, and children, including their access to healthcare, education, livelihood, and protection services. This should be done at regional and country (LCB territory) levels.

Other Stakeholders

For stakeholders such as the LCB Commission, governors of LCB territories, civil society groups, aid agencies, donor partners, private sector organisations, and members of the P3 countries (the UK, France and USA) working and on the Lake Chad Basin area:

- i. 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.
- ii. Enhance communication and public awareness campaigns on COVID-19 to dispel myths, stop the spread of fake news, prevent the stigmatisation of COVID-19 survivors, and promote an adequate understanding of COVID-19 preventive measures in camps and local communities in LCB territories.
- iii. Promote a civilian approach to COVID-19 responses to de-militarise the delivery of services to vulnerable groups and promote the integration of human rights protocols in COVID-19 containment strategies in LCB territories.
- iv. 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.
- v. Ensure the integration of COVID-19 into all RSS territorial plans.
- vi. Work with relevant aid and humanitarian agencies to accelerate the decongestion of

transit centres and camps for IDPs and refugees across the LCB region.

- vii. Partner with private sector organisations and governments of LCB territories to adapt trading practices to COVID-19 containment measures (social distancing, hand washing, use of face masks, etc.).
- viii. 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.
- ix. Facilitate specialist training on COVID-19 for border guards, including effective screening procedures, to prevent cross-border transmission and minimise the disruption of the supply of livestock, sanitary materials, medicine, food, and other humanitarian goods across the LCB region.

Annex 1: COVID-19 Containment Measures and their Impacts and Socio-Economic Mitigation Initiatives in LCB Countries (with Implication for LCB Territories)

LCB Countries	COVID-19 Containment Measures	Immediate Impacts on Population, incl. LCB Territories	Economic Palliatives and Fiscal and Monetary Measures
Cameroon ⁷⁸	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 public masks, closure of restaurants and bars after 1800hrs, public hygiene protocol (hand washing and social distancing), opening specialised testing centres 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.	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. ⁷⁹	Deferrals of utility payments for three months for vulnerable households and accelerated VAT reimbursements. Expanded preparedness and response plan for health spending estimated at CFAF 58.3 billion (\$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 FCFA 240 to 500 billion, and postponement by one-year principal repayment of consolidated central bank's credits to member states.
Chad	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 centres, 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 mobilise 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 travellers and returnees at border posts, loss of schooling and education classes, etc.	A national health contingency plan, slashing of business license rates and presumptive tax by 50% for small firms, deferral of tax payment, payment of domestic debts to suppliers worth CFAF 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 defence and security forces. Others are simplified import process and tax exemption for food and health equipment, hiring more health workers setting up a solidarity fund for the vulnerable population worth CFAF 100 billion. 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 FCFA 240 to 500 billion, and postponement by one year, the principal repayment of consolidated central bank's credits to member states.

78 "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

79 "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

<p>Niger</p>	<p>Declared a national emergency and imposed night curfew in the capital city, reduced official working hours, closed national land and air borders, ban large public gatherings, and closed schools and markets, and restricted movement between the capital city and the rest of the country, including LCB territory of Diffa.</p>	<p>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 travellers and returnees at border posts.</p>	<p>Temporary tax relief, two-months free utilities for vulnerable households, and support for agricultural production.</p> <p>The building of liquidity buffers, temporary suspension of convergence criteria, including 3% of GDP fiscal deficit, under the regional monetary union (WAEMU), and the regional central bank (BCEAO) 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 3-month payment deferrals by customers, the use of electronic payments, and “COVID-19 T-Bills” meet funding needs during COVID-19.</p>
<p>Nigeria</p>	<p>Lockdown of three states of Lagos, Ogun and Abuja (initial epicentres); closure of land, air and sea borders; closure of schools and universities, worship centres, 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 inter-state 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 inter-state 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>Decongesting of prisons, expansion of the social register by 1 million (to 3.6m) households and the distribution of cash and grains as palliatives to vulnerable households; continuation of the school feeding programme for pupils in their houses; and reduction of fuel prices.</p> <p>Release of contingency funds (\$2.7m) to the disease control agency and \$18m for procuring testing kits; opening and expansion of isolation centres; and special grant (\$28m) 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%; one-year moratorium on CBN intervention facilities; establishing a \$139 million credit facility; liquidity injection of 3.6 trillion (2.4 percent of GDP) into the banking system, including N100 billion to support the health sector; N2 trillion support to the manufacturing sector; and N1.5 trillion to the real sector to impacted industries.</p>

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