

Boko Haram-Induced Forced Migration: Implications for Social and Economic Development in the Lake Chad Basin



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ABSTRACT: In Africa, and notably the Lake Chad Basin (LCB), Boko Haram is a major threat to human security. The region, which spans 427,500 km² and contains large ungoverned areas, is made up of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Boko Haram has been responsible for several attacks in Northeast Nigeria since 2003 and is also the leading cause of forced migration in the Lake Chad Basin. In northeastern Nigeria and other LCB countries, this insurgency has caused widespread migration and increased the humanitarian crisis, socio-economic, and environmental consequences. This research aims to examine the developmental challenges emerging from Boko Haram-induced forced displacement in the LCB. Empirical evidence suggests that the Lake Chad Basin countries' governments have failed to contain this group's aggression. However, there are still gaps in the literature regarding how this insurgency has affected social and economic lives of displaced people in the region. The study utilized a case study design, documentary method of data collection, and content analysis as the analytical technique. The study applies the Human Security Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as the theoretical framework. Ultimately, the findings of this study revealed that forced migration severs social ties, leading to economic, social, and psychological impacts, including family separation and loss, with families often split up abruptly due to attacks and evacuation. In Addition, negative economic impacts disproportionately affect impoverished individuals, exacerbating chronic poverty and hindering their ability to escape poverty due to price volatility and wage declines. It was recommended that the governments of Lake Chad Basin countries should develop and implement policies that support the economic integration of refugees and displaced individuals, including measures to facilitate access to employment and promoting self-reliance and resilience. They should also foster initiatives that strengthen social ties and networks among displaced populations to facilitate integration into host communities and mitigate the negative impacts of social disconnection.

KEYWORDS: Forced Migration, Insurgency, Boko Haram, Lake Chad Basin

INTRODUCTION

Boko Haram is a major threat to human security in Africa and the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger make up this 427,500 km² region with vast ungoverned territories. Several Boko Haram attacks have occurred in Northeast Nigeria since 2003. However, two important events helped the group become an insurgent movement. First, the 2009 Nigerian military operation that extrajudicially killed sect leader Yusuf and hundreds of Boko Haram members (MacEachern, 2011). Second, the 2014 kidnapping of 250 Chibok girls in Borno State made Boko Haram prominent. Internationally technical, equipment, and advisory aid helped Nigeria rescue some of the girls amid the major local and worldwide uproar (Fellar, 2018).

A major cause of forced migration in the Lake Chad Basin is Boko Haram. This insurgency resulted in huge migration, notably in northeastern Nigeria and other LCB countries. Unacceptable mass migration has turned communities against displaced people. Community displacement, infrastructural destruction, and vital service collapse have resulted from the insurgency. These socio-economic and environmental changes have increased vulnerabilities and the humanitarian crisis in the region.

Boko Haram has remained resilient and linked to other international terrorist groups, thereby, becoming a transnational terrorist organisation in the Lake Chad Basin. The Institute for Economics and Peace's 2023 Global Terrorism Index report named it as one of the world's ten deadliest terror groups. In LCB, Boko Haram is the biggest source of human displacement. Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria hosted 6,077,690 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees, and refugees as of August 2023, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Sep 20 2023 report. Due to Boko Haram's tremendous violence and widespread damage to private and public property, forced displacement in Lake Chad has had lasting effects. Due to Boko Haram's potential to disrupt and endanger communities through displaced persons, some communities reject and often shun refugees (Human Rights Watch Report, 2022). As a result, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and refugee settlements have

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been established and thousands of displaced people have been absorbed into extended families and other communities. Many of these refugees want to stay in their town, yet returning is risky and difficult. Meanwhile, it is well known that camp residents are victims of sexual assault, exploitation, corruption, and profiling, resulting in humanitarian crises. Against, this background, this study seeks to explore the effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on migration and mobilities in the Lake Chad Basin.

Figure 1: The eight states, provinces, and regions in the Lake Chad Basin that are affected by Boko Haram Insurgency



Source: UNDP Report (2021), Conflict Analysis in the Lake Chad Basin 2020-2021

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review synthesises major themes, theories, and empirical investigations to contextualise and explain the research.

Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB)

According to Muhammed (2017), a group connected to a young man who identified himself as a cleric, Muhammad Yusuf, called the Nigerian Taliban, attempted in 2003 and 2004 to create a semi-secessionist enclave in the village of Kanama, where Yusuf was born. They supposedly took issue with Yusuf's sluggish community-building efforts and preference for teaching (Da'wah) over direct conflict. Members of the organisation were either murdered or scattered during the group's conflict with security personnel. Yusuf was forced by the heightened attention to go into exile in Saudi Arabia. After returning, he carried on building his center for Islamic education (Markaz) and the larger society. Muhammed (2017) further stated that an enraged Yusuf requested that the responsible police officers be prosecuted after they fired and injured many members of the organisation during a funeral procession in June 2009. He advised his supporters to get ready for battle when nothing changed. Clashes broke out in numerous northern Nigerian states the next month between protestors and security personnel. Following the deployment of reinforcements by the security forces, an estimated 800 people—mostly innocent bystanders—were killed in the ensuing operation. Due to Yusuf's arrest, torture, and execution, his followers' already-present animosity towards the government was heightened. Revolutionary resentment and security forces' brutality informed the group's retaliatory strategy; they have repeatedly highlighted Yusuf's execution in talks. Violence increased following his death. Thurston (2017) claims that Shekau, the new leader, pushed people to convert to Islam or suffer violence.

Abubakar (2017) claims the government declared the insurgent group extinct after a crackdown. Boko Haram, led by Abubakar Shekau, staged a Bauchi jailbreak in September 2010. They renamed themselves Jama'atul Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda' Awati wal Jihad. The organisation killed politicians, law enforcement officials, religious and community leaders in retribution for people they believed had abandoned them. Several months later, on Christmas Eve 2010, numerous explosives exploded in Maiduguri and Jos, central Nigeria, showing that the organisation was willing to use violence to achieve its goals, which went beyond retaliation.

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According to Assanvo W. (2016), Nigeria's shortcomings are the main cause of the Boko Haram crisis, and the previous years have shown how Boko Haram has exploited political and social gaps. However, the LCB countries established the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) during the 1964 Fort Lamy Convention, before Boko Haram existed. It was created to address environmental issues. The LCBC then coordinated cross-border crime prevention efforts. The same nations created the MNJTF in the 1990s. Founded in 1994 to combat organised crime and banditry, this group was fully operational by 1998. The AU Peace and Security Council sanctioned the MNJTF's deployment by 2015 to address the regional Boko Haram situation.

In January 2015, Boko Haram committed its worst tragedy in Baga, near Lake Chad, according to Cocodia (2017). Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon soldiers from the African Union's MNJTF at Baga. When Boko Haram invaded in January 2015, the town's residents helped forces resist it. After the forces' loss, Boko Haram killed up to 2000 civilians in retribution. In the group's two films, commander Shekau insulted the Nigerian army while exhibiting weaponry he had acquired and claimed responsibility for killing the towns' "infidels." The other tape showed an unidentified person explaining the killing as self-defense, calling all Muslims to move to the conquered region, and burning the Nigerian flag to end the movie. One could read the Baga massacre as a retaliation to the group's recent heavy setbacks. With help from local hunters who had fought road bandits and cattle rustlers and formed self-defense groups, and a state-hired private military company called Specialised Task, Training, Equipment, and Protection, the Nigerian army and its MNJTF allies were gaining ground.

By extending outside Nigeria, Boko Haram shows its international nature. The organization's transnational activities and linkages to other extremist groups have heightened the region's vulnerability, according to Amao (2020). The open borders allow terrorists, arms, and resources to cross, making terrorism prevention harder. Cross-border activities define transnational terrorism. Onuoha (2014) claims that extremist groups use loose governance and porous borders to create alliances and spread globally. The entry of Boko Haram into Lake Chad Basin countries makes transnational alliances for resource acquisition, operational assistance, and recruitment less difficult.

Boko Haram and Forced Migration in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB)

Forced migration, which can have several causes, is defined by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as force, compulsion, or coercion. A defining note states, "This phrase refers to refugees, displaced people (including those displaced by disasters or development projects), and trafficking victims. Not an international legal notion." As it is commonly accepted that there is a continuum of agency rather than a voluntary/forced dichotomy, this phrase is problematic globally and may threaten the legal structure that offers universal protection. (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

According to Kanu et al. (2022), Boko Haram refugees face an enormous humanitarian crisis with unmet food, water, and housing needs. Lifesaving aid and lasting solutions are needed. Forced displacement has lasting effects. Everything is affected by forced displacement. People become poor after losing their homes, family, livelihoods, assets, rights, and social networks. They further stated that forced displacement has lasting effects. Displacement affects everything. Poverty strikes instantly, destroying homes, families, livelihoods, assets, rights, and social networks. Social and economic public goods are degraded and public resentments increase as formal and informal institutions, economic systems, markets, service supply, and social and kin networks are displaced. Examples include human trafficking, extremism, insecurity, and escalating sexual and gender-based violence.

Arntsen (2020) reports that refugees from across the border began arriving in Cameroon villages and cities before Cameroon militarily intervened in the Boko Haram conflict in 2014. In July 2013, UNHCR constructed Minawawo refugee camp 60 km west of Maroua in the Far North Region. Though designed for 12-14,000, it hosted over 50,000 in 2020. When civilians were attacked heavily, most of people arrived at the camp between 2014 and 2016. Since the attacks entered Cameroon, several IDP camps were built in Mora and Mokolo near the border. The humanitarian situation goes beyond refugee and IDP camps. Many forced migrants live in villages, towns, and Maroua, although many were registered in these camps.

IOM report (2019) states that Nigeria is suffering the greatest internal displacement of the four affected countries, with over two million people displaced internally across six states in the country's northeast due to the affected area's greater size and population. Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states have the largest number of displaced households; most of them are residing in host communities. Internally displaced people frequently live in substandard conditions and have access to little or no basic services.

Mukhtar et al. (2018), opines that many pressures and reasons have caused involuntary forced migration in Nigeria, displacing a huge number of refugees and IDPs. The Biafra War (1967–1970), Mai-Tatsine crises (1979–1980), Ijaw unrest (1998–1999), Nigeria–Cameroon Bakasi peninsula conflicts, 2011 post-election crises, Niger Delta oil-rich region conflicts (1990–present), Southern Kaduna crises in Kaduna state, Jos Plateau crises in Plateau state, Fulani nomadic herdsmen and farmers conflicts, and several inter-communal conflicts have plagued Nigeria.

The Boko Haram conflict, the most significant push factor among the seven major causes of forced displacement, accounts for 70% of the total displaced population in the four Lake Chad Region countries, according to the UNHCR (2016). In Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger, 3.5 million people are forcibly displaced. 2.5 million are victims of Boko Haram, 800,000 are victims of other man-made crises like conflicts in Mali, Sudan, and the Central African Republic, intercommunity violence, and cattle rustling, and 200,000 are victims of natural disasters, mostly floods, in the South Central and North West regions of Nigeria and Northern Cameroon. The research also claimed that while the conflict affects borders, the Boko Haram insurgency is primarily forcing internal

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relocation. The Boko Haram war has internally displaced 92% of people. Nigeria has 1.9 million of the 2.5 million Boko Haram-displaced people in the globe, making it one of the top 10 countries with the most IDPs. By May 2016, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger had 427,000 IDPs and returnees and 210,000 Nigerian refugees from this war, according to UNHCR and official figures. Niger, which has 177,000 IDPs and returnees and 138,000 refugees—7.6% of all IDPs and 66% of all refugees from this conflict—is the second most affected nation after Nigeria.

Iorbo's (2022) research conducted in Benue State, north central Nigeria, provides insight into the challenges faced by internally displaced individuals (IDPs) as they adjust to their new surroundings and learn to navigate. They encounter severe destitution and significant barriers to social integration. IDPs lament the extreme hunger, the restriction on using agriculture to help them meet their basic needs, the lack of access to healthcare, education, and shelter (for those residing in unofficial camps), the subpar housing and invasion of privacy for those residing in official camps, and other issues. The study shows that their shelters were inadequately protected from the weather and had no windows. The primary barriers to social engagement that internally displaced individuals (IDPs) faced in their new communities were farmlands, a dearth of work options, and subpar or nonexistent housing. The latter came about as a result of the host towns' unwillingness to lease or provide the IDPs a piece of land. In a similar assessment carried out in North Central and North-West Nigeria, 74 of the 101 camps and camp-like situations were identified, including four transitional camps, 22 collective settlements, and centres. Moreover, sixty-four percent of the environments were camps on public or government-owned land, whereas thirty percent of the environments were camps or structures resembling camps situated on private land.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE/Framework

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), developed by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, provides a lens through which we can analyze the intricate dynamics of the Boko Haram insurgency and forced migration in the Lake Chad Basin. It states that actors' actions and motives are regional, and influenced by the environment. Threats within regions spread quickly and spill over into surrounding areas due to socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental factors, implying regional actor security. The RSCT theory is complicated by states' global security interests and force projection capabilities due to regional actors' strong security interconnectedness. Due to interconnectedness, security concerns in one state affects neighbouring states. Due to shared security interests and weaknesses, states in an area share security concerns.

The RSCT helps explain how regional security dynamics affect forced migration. Population displacement is caused by interconnected security issues and national conflicts. It examines how regional response—or lack thereof—affects cross-border displaced people and communities. The Boko Haram conflict has increased Lake Chad Basin security collaboration. Migration, cross-border attacks, and their global reach highlight how a country's security depends on its neighbours. In Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fights Boko Haram. Task forces display collaboration to tackle a common enemy.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a case study design to uncover nuanced insights and patterns using the documentary method of data collection from official gazettes, reports, official statements, news articles, books, and official documents. While content analysis serves as the analytical technique.

IMPLICATIONS OF BOKO HARAM-INDUCED FORCED MIGRATION ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN (LCB)

Primarily, individuals who have been displaced by Boko Haram are facing a severe humanitarian catastrophe characterised by many and unfulfilled fundamental necessities, including sustenance, clean water, and adequate housing. Providing aid that saves lives is extremely important, as well as finding long-term solutions to address these difficulties. Moreover, the consequences of involuntary displacement are not only profound but also enduring. Forced displacement has a profound impact on many aspects of life. With a single action, individuals are stripped of their residences, loved ones, means of income, possessions, entitlements, and social connections, leaving them completely impoverished. In addition to causing the deterioration of social and economic public resources, the disturbance caused by displacement affects both official and informal institutions, economic systems, markets, service provision, and social and kin networks. This disruption leads to the creation and exacerbation of socially undesirable outcomes or public resentments.

Impacts of Forced Displacement on Social Connectedness

The breaking of social ties is one of the biggest and most damaging effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on the displaced people. There are major economic, social, and psychological effects from home separation and family member loss due to conflict and displacement. Families are frequently split up as a result of the Boko Haram attacks' abrupt evacuation and dispersal of communities. Members of the household may also purposefully disperse as a coping strategy, dividing the stress of relocation among

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other families. A growing proportion of unaccompanied minors and "unconventional" households are the results of this. For those who were displaced, social ties had a significant role in determining their final destination. Individuals and households that are forced to flee mobilise social and financial capital to help them with basic necessities including food and water, homes, livelihoods, and valuables. It is simpler for people with social ties to locate housing and start over in the regions of sanctuary. Those lacking this social capital, on the other hand, are compelled to live on the periphery of society, in camps and incomplete structures, with even less opportunities to rebuild their lives. A large percentage of those who are forcefully displaced—in particular, internally displaced people living in camps or areas resembling camps—dwell in "unconnected" sorts of communities. In Nigeria, 8% of internally displaced people reside in camps or areas resembling camps. 36 percent of the 92% of IDPs who are still residing in host communities reported living in "unconnected" settlements, which include public spaces, partially completed or abandoned buildings, temporary shelters, or emergency shelters. In Niger and Chad the majority of the displaced have settled in spontaneous camp-like sites, many in the vicinity of refugee camps, as this increases their chances of accessing aid. These settlements tend to be more "connected" to the dynamics of refugee camps than to that of host communities, and as such displaced persons have limited opportunity to integrate into the social and economic life of locals (UNHCR, 2016).

Among displaced people, social connections have a significant role in determining their location of choice. Individuals and households that are forced to flee mobilise social and financial capital to help them with basic necessities including food and water, homes, livelihoods, and valuables. It is simpler for people with social ties to locate housing and start over in the regions of sanctuary. Those lacking this social capital, on the other hand, are compelled to live on the periphery of society, in camps and incomplete structures, with even less opportunities to rebuild themselves. Since social connections are so important, the resilience of the displaced and their longer-term development outcomes are impacted by changes in social connectedness. For the same reason, social connectivity became central to the demands of recovery, not just as something affected by forced displacement but also as an amplifying or moderating component of consequences in other areas. Serious disruptions in social networks, family, community, and kinship networks are more likely to be reported by victims of displacement brought on by the Boko Haram insurgency. Also, Poverty prevents displaced people from integrating socially with host communities. The displaced population's lack of finances limits their ability to engage with members of their host communities by preventing them from engaging in social activities that comprise communal life, such shopping or attending religious or social celebrations.

Economic Impacts of Forced Displacement

The phenomenon of forced displacement has had a substantial impact on the economy of the places affected, yielding both positive and negative consequences. However, the majority of them have not been measured or assessed. In the Lake Chad Region, there are enormous fiscal pressures in areas impacted by displacement due to the need for many regional, state, and municipal administrations to consistently provide food, water, and shelter.

The negative economic consequences of forced displacement disproportionately harm the most impoverished individuals, worsening existing circumstances of long-term poverty.

Simultaneously, the presence of the displaced inhabitants has generated economic prospects in the most destitute regions of the area. Local marketplaces have developed in remote regions to cater to the need of internally displaced individuals and refugees.

Forcible displacement has a negative economic impact that disproportionately affects the poorest, aggravating chronic poverty. The impoverished are disproportionately affected, particularly in terms of their nutrition, by the price volatility of necessities like food and water as well as the paucity of cereals that were previously imported from Nigeria. In a similar vein, lower skilled workers bear the brunt of some areas' wage declines, which lowers overall incomes. When these factors come together, it becomes harder for a poor individual to make ends meet and gives them a lower likelihood of getting out of poverty. Additionally, a decline in trade and investment in the region has been attributed to instability. Increasing business costs have caused several enterprises to either completely withdraw from the region or reduce their operations. An atmosphere that encourages investment opportunities is discouraged by insecurity. The level of instability in the area intimidates potential investors, discouraging them from making an investment. All investors desire to engage in their investments in a financially secure and supportive atmosphere. Since they are aware that the Lake Chad Basin is a conflict zone, doing business there becomes extremely difficult. The region's economy has been severely hit by this, since there has been a sharp fall in food and service production, which has resulted in high unemployment and poverty rates. Refugees and displaced individuals have been significantly impacted by this, as they are unable to access favourable employment prospects that could improve their living conditions.

In some of the poorest sections of the region, however, the presence of the displaced residents has opened up economic prospects. In remote locations, local marketplaces have grown up to meet the requirements of refugees and internally displaced people. Little makeshift markets frequently surround camps, and as more displaced individuals move into the camps, the markets expand. If there were more options for small-scale finance, they may become available. According to field study, a large number of internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees are astute businesspeople or possess abilities that, given access to small grants or loans for startup capital, may be promptly utilised to productively contribute to the local economy. IDPs with more freedom to travel, work, and own property are better suited for this alternative, although refugees may still benefit from it if appropriate policy frameworks are in place.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research reveals a dire humanitarian situation characterized by unmet fundamental needs among displaced populations, including access to sustenance, clean water, and adequate housing. This acute deprivation underscores the immediate need for humanitarian aid interventions aimed at saving lives and alleviating suffering. However, beyond the urgent humanitarian response, it is imperative to address the underlying causes of forced displacement and invest in long-term solutions to rebuild shattered lives and communities. The paper revealed that forced displacement severs social ties, leading to economic, social, and psychological impacts, including family separation and loss, with families often split up abruptly due to attacks and evacuation. Families torn apart by conflict and evacuation struggle to reunite, while individuals find themselves isolated and marginalized in unfamiliar environments. This social disconnection not only exacerbates the trauma of displacement but also hinders the integration of displaced populations into host communities. In Addition, negative economic impacts disproportionately affect impoverished individuals, exacerbating chronic poverty and hindering their ability to escape poverty due to price volatility and wage declines. Also, Instability in the region has led to a decline in trade and investment, discouraging businesses from operating in the area and resulting in high unemployment and poverty rates, particularly affecting refugees and displaced individuals.

It is therefore recommended that the governments of Lake Chad Basin countries should develop and implement policies that support the economic integration of refugees and displaced individuals, including measures to facilitate access to employment and promoting self-reliance and resilience. They should also foster initiatives that strengthen social ties and networks among displaced populations to facilitate integration into host communities and mitigate the negative impacts of social disconnection. Additionally, the governments should develop and implement long-term strategies to address the root causes of forced displacement, including conflict resolution, peace building efforts, and socioeconomic development initiatives in affected regions.

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