



PREFACE

to COVID-19 Situational
Briefs Series



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AUTHOR:

Olawale Ismael

EDITOR:

Chika Charles Aniekwe. PhD

Preface to COVID-19 Situational Briefs Series

The UNDP Regional Stabilization Facility for Lake Chad is pleased to introduce a Situational Briefs series focused on exploring the potential and emerging implications of COVID-19 for stabilization, recovery, and resilience in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). The Situational Briefs series assumes that the spread of COVID-19 and the response strategies by governments at different levels have implications for communities, citizens, government programs and priorities, resources and capabilities. Experiences from other regions of Africa and the globe point to COVID-19 as a 'watershed' moment, marked by seismic shifts in local, national, regional and international realities.

The United Nations Secretary-General, in remarks delivered on 9 April 2020 to the Security Council about the COVID-19 pandemic noted, "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 Secretary-General 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 bioterrorism attacks that, in turn, 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, "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 major

disruptions of socioeconomic, political and social relations, and the security situation. In fact, COVID-19 is ushering in a 'new normal', a COVID-19 era. Like other parts of the world, the LCB region is not immune from the spread and impact of COVID-19. The multilayered and multidimensional nature of the crisis in the LCB region would suggest that the disease itself and the response strategies will likely increase the complexities of the crises in the region; it will affect and even undermine the priorities, resources and capabilities of local and international actors, including governments.

To be sure, the incidence of COVID-19 in the LCB area and Africa as a whole is rising, and epidemiological models and recent experiences of other countries and regions of the world point to a rapid acceleration of its spread over the coming weeks and months. In LCB territories and countries, available data point to a steady increase in the number of confirmed cases. The initial lockdown strategy and subsequent phased reopening preferred by LCB states to slow and manage the spread of COVID-19 continues to impact governments and governance, citizens and societies at large.

The Situational Briefs series will involve selected papers, each of which will focus on priority themes relevant to the RSS and the Facility's mandate of promoting immediate and extended stabilization, recovery and resilience in the LCB. The first Brief will cover governance, exploring how COVID-19 could impact governance issues, especially human rights, democratic accountability and transparency, service delivery and market interface in Lake Chad Basin, and the implications of this on the stabilization 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 Situational Brief will look into the impact of COVID-19 on youth radicalization and violent extremism, including how COVID-19 and response strategies adopted by governments impact youth livelihoods, education, associational life, poverty and deprivation,

1 Guterres, António, 'Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council on the COVID-19 Pandemic', 9 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, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa', 20 May 2020, p.2 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf

and the relationship between young people and state authorities. The fourth Situational Brief will explore the implications of COVID-19 and response strategies for vulnerable groups, specifically women and girls, in relation to sexual and gender-based violence in the LCB with an emphasis on rape (criminal rape and marital rape), domestic violence, women's economic activities and access to sexual and reproductive health.

The Situational Briefs are intended to trace and analyze the evolution of COVID-19 and response strategies in the LCB states, including areas affected by Boko Haram insurgency, and also to provide initial rapid analysis and assessment of its implications for priority themes and the overall stabilization agenda as contained in the RSS. The Situational Briefs are also to trigger initial reflections and requisite changes in approaches, programming priorities, and potential 'repurposing' of strategies and resources, and the 'recalibration' of capabilities with respect to the stabilization agenda for the LCB area. Third, given the disruptions and associated panic occasioned by COVID-19 across the board, the Situational Briefs are intended to refocus and sustain attention on the stabilization agenda in the LCB, especially to align and integrate COVID-19 strategies into the broader stabilization agenda in the LCB. Finally, COVID-19 is not only about challenges, 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 stabilization agenda in the LCB, including exploring ways of adapting a regional approach and operationalizing the 'new ways of working' in a COVID-19 era.

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Lake Chad Basin

Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (RSS)-Secretariat
Place de la Grande Armée, B.P. 727, N'Djamena, Tchad

Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad



Federal Foreign Office



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

