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Ecological Damage of Lake Chad

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Over the past five to six decades, Lake Chad has undergone a lot of extinction and degradation events since the 1960s. Several factors have been attributed to the diminution of the lake's resources. However, there are three that appear to be prominent: population pressure, overexploitation of the resources from the lake, and climatic changes.

There has been a great fluctuation in the climatic trends on climatic change, which date back many years and has negatively impacted the lake. It has been noted that through these changes, there has been an altered balance between the evaporation rates and the water intake into the lake, and since the lake is shallow, it has changed in size and shape over the years (Onuoha, 2008). Since the 1960s, rainfall has been experienced in areas surrounding the lake, and the regions of inflowing rivers have decreased. River Chari, for instance, had reduced inflow and prolonged droughts in the region, which lead to low groundwater tables and loss of covering pasture, all of which led to diminishing lakes.

Uncontrolled exploitation and usage of water from Lake Chad have drastically led to its degradation and loss of its value. The local community has continuously used the water from the Lake for irrigation projects. The local governments of the four neighboring countries, Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon, have constructed different dams that have diverted large volumes of water from the Lake (Onuoha, 2008). Since the water catchment areas remain unaffected, these excess usages of water from the Lake have reduced water volume. The construction of Tiga, Alau, Maga, and many more dams had reduced the volume of water by 30% in the early 1960s (Onuoha, 2008). In the last 25 years, the construction of dams and the increased need for freshwater for irrigations have further reduced the water volume by 50%.

The increased population within the four neighboring countries is another challenging factor degradation of Lake Chad. An increase of 24 million people has been witnessed around

the catchment areas since the 1960s (Onuoha, 2008). This estimated the average population growth to be 2.6%. An increased population results in increased activities of livestock keeping, irrigation, and pollution of the Lake. When the population is huge, the resources within their reach will not be enough to sustain them. The net results are increased exploitation of those resources which resulted in degradation of the Lake. Increased pollution has affected the lives of natural resources within the Lake (Onuoha, 2008). These actions have limited the growth of aquatic animals; their numbers decreased anonymously.

The lake played a very big role as a habitat for several species, bringing about great diversity in the ecosystem. Several species became extinct following the degradation series of events through over-exploitative activities like fishing and irrigation (Onuoha, 2008). Other's species fell pray of natural selection where the well-adapted species could survive while those least suited disappeared. The article elaborates the unsustainable practices as one of the factors which led to the degradation of the resources in the lake.

Reference

- Onuoha, F. C. (2008). Environmental degradation, livelihood, and conflicts: A focus on the implications of the diminishing water resources of Lake Chad for north-eastern Nigeria. *African journal on conflict resolution*, 8(2), 35-61.

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