

RESILAC*

*LAKE CHAD INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

LESSON-SHARING REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL COHESION ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER 2022

SOCIAL COHESION



SUMMARY

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| Background of the project | 4 |
| Presentation of the RESILAC projet | 4 |
| Operational areas | 5 |
| Rationale and methodology of the study | 6 |
| 1. CONTEXT AND ISSUES | 7 |
| 1.1 Sources of conflicts | 7 |
| 1.2 Multi-level responses | 9 |
| 2. RESILAC RESPONSE | 12 |
| 2.1 Presentation of Pillar 1.1 - 1.3 | 12 |
| 2.2 Results of Pillar 1.1 - 1.3 | 14 |
| 3. RESULTS | 15 |
| 3.1 Capacity building | 15 |
| 3.2 Inclusion | 18 |
| 3.3 Social justice | 22 |
| 4. LESSONS LEARNED | 25 |
| 4.1 Participatory approach | 26 |
| 4.2 Integrated approach | 29 |
| 4.3 Sustainable approach | 31 |
| 5. RECOMMENDATIONS | 34 |
| 5.1 Strategy | 34 |
| 5.2 Implementation | 35 |
| 5.3 Advocacy | 38 |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| CBHW | Community-based Health Workers |
| ACF | Action contre la Faim |
| IGA | Income Generating Activities |
| VSLA | Village Saving and Loans Associations |
| PIB | Public Investment Budget |
| LCB | Lake Chad Basin |
| MJTF | Multinational Joint Task Force |
| NSAG | Non-state Armed Group |
| NRM | National Resouce Management |
| LIPW | Labour-intensive Public Work |
| HACP | Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix |
| CBO | Community-based Organisations |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisations |
| PM+ | Problem Management Plus |
| PM | Pillar Manager |
| SFCG | Search for Common Ground |
| GBV | Gender-based Violence |

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The Lake Chad Basin covers parts of the four countries bordering Lake Chad (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad) and extends 1000 km from north to south and 500 km from east to west. In 2015, it was estimated that the active watershed of Lake Chad was home to nearly 50 million people. Considered essential to the food security of 13 million people and two metropolises - N'Djaména, the capital of Chad, and Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in Nigeria - in recent decades it has been faced with a number of major challenges of different kinds: environmental (vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change and the pressure maintained on natural resources; socio-economic (rapid population growth, religious tensions, poverty, etc.) ; and political (corruption, repeated political crises and geopolitical issues).

Since 2009, the region has also been subject to an unprecedented security crisis linked to the insurgency of various non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Their attacks, exactions and territorial expansion since 2013-2014 have had a major impact on the regional economy (halting of trade flows) and on the population (murders, kidnappings, mass population displacement, etc.). The NSAGs' terror strategy, and the responses by the national defence and security forces, combined with the chronic challenges of the region, have resulted in the reinforcement of pre-existing conflicts (agro-pastoral conflicts induced by the scarcity of natural resources, inter- and intra-community conflicts, etc.) while promoting new forms of conflict (between displaced and host populations, between different religious and ethnic groups, the creation of citizen-based self defence militias leading to an increase in violence, etc.). In 2017, this region was considered one of the most vulnerable in Africa and subject to one of the worst contemporary humanitarian crises¹.

PRESENTATION OF THE RESILAC PROJECT

It is in this multidimensional crisis context that the RESILAC project «Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery around Lake Chad» was launched in 2018. Co-funded by the European Union (Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and the French Development Agency for a duration of 4 years (2018-2021), and a duration of one year (2022). RESILAC is implemented by an international consortium: Action contre la Faim - lead partner, CARE and Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD), in partnership with the CCFD - Terre Solidaire network, Search For Common Ground (SFCG) and local organizations in the four countries (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad).

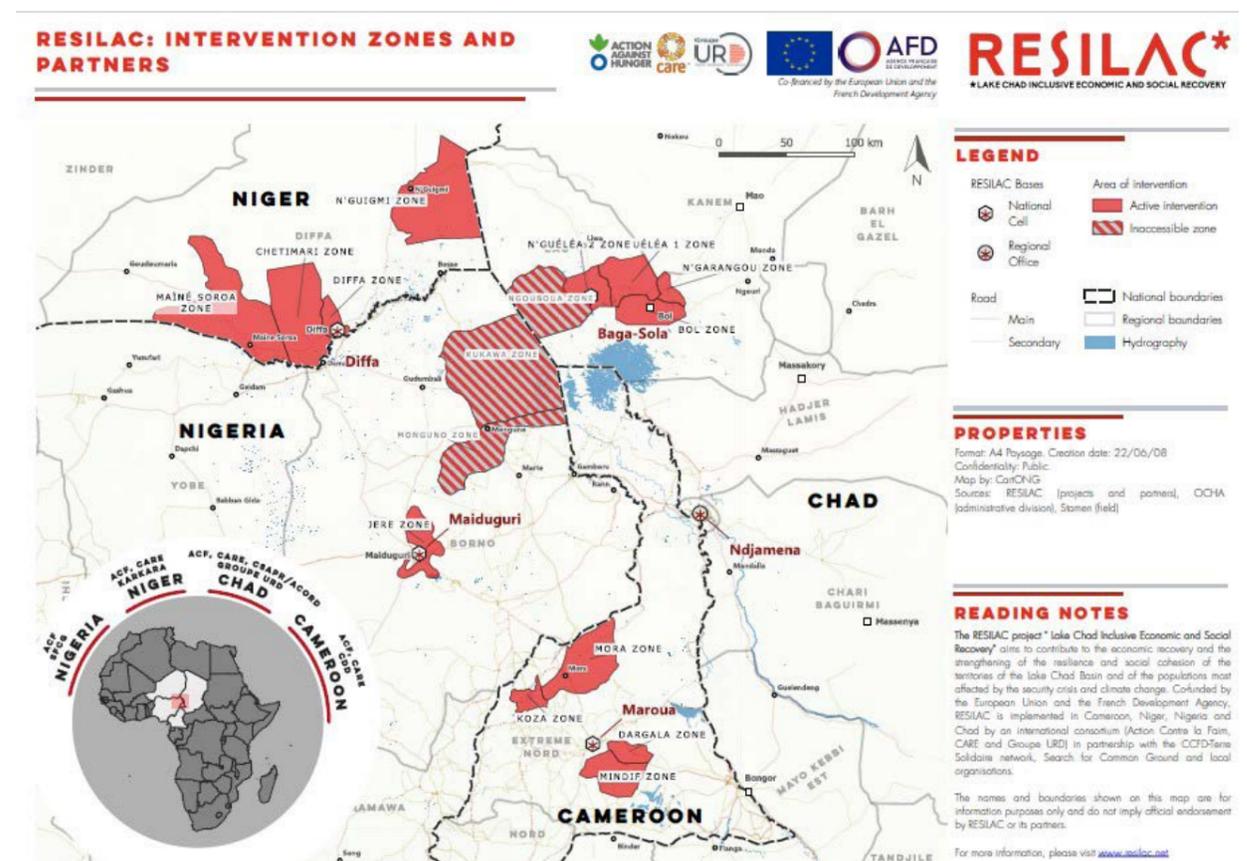
This project aims to contribute to economic recovery and increased resilience and social

1 - Groupe URD, « Approche territoriale en contexte de crise: levier pour le renforcement de la résilience », mars 2022.

cohesion in the territories of the Lake Chad Basin most affected by the security crisis and climate change. The RESILAC project is structured around four operational areas (pillars):

- **Pillar 1:** Strengthening human capital and social cohesion, by improving the social cohesion of the population, particularly through support for territorial development and psychosocial support for victims of armed groups.
- **Pillar 2:** Economic recovery and resilience, creating jobs through community infrastructure rehabilitation and supporting agricultural micro-entrepreneurship and apprenticeships.
- **Pillar 3:** Institutional capacity building, by improving the governance of municipalities for better management of territories and natural resources.
- **Pillar 4:** Knowledge production to contribute to the quality of project activities, and to inform the decisions made by local actors.

OPERATIONAL AREAS



STUDY RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

This report is part of the capitalization process of the RESILAC project, which responds to the teams' wish to share their results and learnings after more than four years of implementation. It focuses on the support to social cohesion and natural resources management (pillar 1.1 - pillar 1.3) provided by the project, and has three objectives:

1. To share the **results** of the project with the team, as well as with donors, aid actors, the authorities, local actors, etc.;
2. To formalise **lessons learned** (challenges, good practices, innovative approaches, etc.) during the project in order to share them with internal and external stakeholders;
3. To share these **lessons** with donors and the authorities to help with decision-making and changes in practice at a more systemic level.

The methodology of the report is based on:

- A **literature review** (Groupe URD research, evaluations, midlines, internal reports, success stories);
- Twenty **interviews** with project team members in the four countries.

This lesson sharing exercise aims to highlight the main aspects of the project as seen by those involved in the project, their partners and the beneficiaries. It is therefore not an evaluation that aims to establish a value judgement on the achievement of results, but to formalise the partners' learning on certain aspects of the activities, beyond the results, and based on their experience.

Limitations:

- The availability of participants to provide information for the lesson-sharing process during the final phase of the project;
- The impossibility of travelling to the operational areas;
- The availability of some of the employees, in the final phase of the project, who had already ended their contracts.

1. CONTEXT AND ISSUES

1.1 SOURCES OF CONFLICTS

The Lake Chad Basin is affected by a multi-dimensional crisis linked to the proliferation of NSAGs which, combined with global warming and cyclical food crises, leads to mass displacement and creates inter-community tensions. In addition to constant insecurity, there is also continuous pressure on natural resources, in an area that is already extremely poor and where there are few, if any, basic services.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Almost the entire population of the Lake Chad Basin makes a living from agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries activities in an area where access to natural resources has become increasingly limited. The population of the Lake Chad Basin once benefited from abundant natural resources and flourishing local trade based on a vast network of different languages and cultures. However, the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, the subsequent variability of rainfall, and the arrival of more people around the lake in search of fertile land, increased pressure on resources². Local institutions struggled to cope with these changes, and to effectively manage competition between farmers, herders and fishermen, leading to conflict. Tensions have also risen due to global warming, which increases the vulnerability of social, ecological and economic activities, and makes it increasingly difficult to plan for crops and livestock movements³.

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The security crisis has reactivated ethnic and religious tensions in an area that has long been characterised by the diversity of its population. The Lake Chad Basin has undergone successive waves of colonisation and conquest by major kingdoms, which have led to the presence of a multi-ethnic population in the region⁴. The security crisis has reactivated various ethnic tensions, associating certain groups with terrorists. In Chad, as in Niger, Boudouma fishermen are accused of having joined NSAGs, including by certain administrative authorities. Indeed, some have been involved in these groups⁵, as were the Kanouri in Nigeria and Cameroon⁶. Religion can also be a source of tension in the Lake Chad Basin, especially when it is linked to state affairs, as it was the case

2 - Climate Diplomacy, *Local conflicts over resources around Lake Chad*.

3 - Ibid.

4 - The Manga, Nguizim, Ngasser, Koyam, Mobber and Margi-Putai in particular are conquered and assimilated. The Bedde, Nounio, Machena, Gummel, Boudouma, Gamergou, Damagarin, Kotoko, Marghi Babal and Mandara accept the suzerainty of Bornou. The Chamba, Bata, Bolewa, Kaleli, Tal. (ibid.)

5 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

6 - ICG, "Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond the Security Response", March 2017.

with the emergence of Boko Haram. In 2002, when Mohamed Yusuf⁷ created the organisation, he advocated a radical and rigorous form of Islam, and linked the country's challenges (political mismanagement, corruption, inequality, absence of the state, etc.) to the failure to apply the Sharia law properly⁸.

MASS DISPLACEMENT

Armed conflicts, coupled with global warming, have also caused mass displacement, which has increased ethnic and religious tensions, as well as tensions over access to natural resources. The violence of the conflicts, the security forces' response, and state of emergency measures have upset the balance of the region. This has led to mass displacement which has undermined existing territorial relationships and increased tensions between different communities⁹. As of 30 June 2022, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger were hosting more than 5 million people affected by the crisis (internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees), 75% of whom are in Nigeria¹⁰. This displacement has increased tensions over the limited natural resources in the region in terms of access to land, water, timber, etc.¹¹.

DIFFICULT POLITICAL GOVERNANCE

The multidimensional crisis in the Lake Chad Basin has made political governance in the area more difficult. Geographically and politically remote from government decision-making bodies, populations do not feel well represented, and do not trust the political system (political parties, elections) which has little control over internal and cross-border conflicts. Moreover, the initial response to the security crisis by the governments of the Lake Chad Basin, beginning with Nigeria, was military-based and repressive. While the armed forces were initially seen as having liberated the population from the Islamic sect's violence, their presence has led to new tensions and they have been accused of violence and abuses.

7 - Born on 29 January 1970 in Girgiri village, Yobe State, north-east Nigeria, and died on 30 July 2009 in Maiduguri.

8 - France Culture, "Boko Haram : l'histoire d'un mouvement terroriste", March 2019.

9 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

10 - DTM, « Matrice de suivi des déplacements, crise du bassin du Lac Tchad », June 2022.

11 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

1.2 MULTI-LEVEL RESPONSES

The conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin are therefore present at various levels. At the local level, they are mainly linked to ethnic and religious tensions or access to natural resources, while at the more global level, they are related to the relationship between the state and the population, modes of governance and the impact of the security crisis. This dual perspective can sometimes make it difficult for actors to understand the objectives of peace and social cohesion programmes¹².

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Since 2017, the international community has intensified its efforts in the Lake Chad Basin and is promoting a «triple nexus» approach¹³. Given the protracted and multi-dimensional crisis in the region, the **triple nexus** approach makes it possible to respond to people's priority needs (humanitarian), while building resilience to future shocks (development), and aiming for the long-term stability of the territory (peace). Although there is a consensus on the added value of enhanced cooperation between these three sectors, the debate is mainly centred on the notion of peace. Some include elements of security and counter-terrorism, while others focus on local action. The latter involves 'soft' activities aimed at strengthening social cohesion or community reconciliation.

Moreover, the notion of **social cohesion** itself remains a vague, complex concept, the definitions of which may differ depending on the implementing partner and the operational context. The box below brings together several aspects of social cohesion highlighted in the literature review and the interviews.

SOCIAL COHESION - Definitions

The expression «social cohesion», first used in 1893 by the sociologist Émile Durkheim, refers to the proper functioning of a society in which there is solidarity between individuals and collective consciousness.

- It refers to the vertical and horizontal relationships within the community:
 - The **vertical dimension** represents the trust between the state and society;
 - The **horizontal dimension** describes the trust, relationships and interactions between people within a society.

12 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

13 - Introduced at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, the triple nexus aims to strengthen collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors, as well as coherence and complementarity between their respective mandates.

- In order to maintain these relationships, social cohesion is based on a number of principles. The two main principles are:
 - **Social inclusion:** feelings of belonging and trust, as well as mutual aid and cooperation that create and strengthen links between people¹⁴.
 - **Social justice:** the alleviation of community tensions and social problems through effective conflict resolution methods that preserve the bonds between people.
- Strengthening social cohesion is therefore not only a matter of creating links, but also of preserving them in the event of conflicts. Nor is it a question of avoiding all types of conflicts or tensions, which are inherent to the very functioning of a community, but of ensuring that they are resolved peacefully¹⁵.
- Finally, in order to create, strengthen and preserve relationships within society, projects can have an impact on:
 - **community members**, to strengthen their awareness, skills and social values, and to encourage citizen mobilisation;
 - **community-based organisations**, to create a favourable framework for this citizen mobilisation and to strengthen mutual aid, solidarity and cooperation;
 - **institutions**, both formal and informal¹⁶, to foster citizen mobilisation and long-term conflict resolution in a more stable and peaceful environment.
- The three levels are interdependent. Community members feel that there is cohesion: between them when there is an appropriate environment for their action, with compatible norms and values¹⁷. This holistic approach to social cohesion aims to strengthen both the analytical capacities of community members and the way they act in the territory.

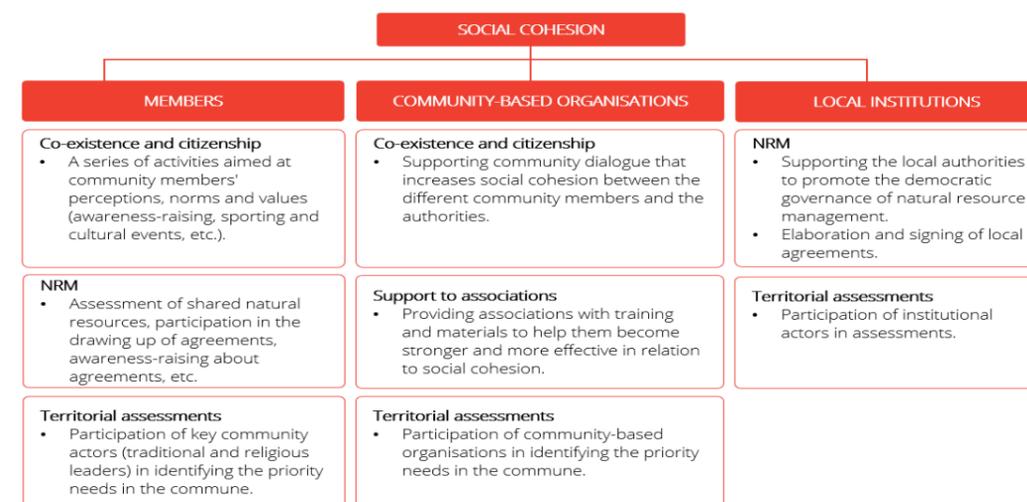
14 - "Inclusion means collective inclusion or non-exclusion based on identity. However, inclusion is an individual choice, not an obligation. Individuals are encouraged to take part and share, but are not forced to do so. Truly cohesive societies therefore differ from societies in which identity is defined by the state and inclusion, as such, is the result of coercion or obligation". (UNDP, "Strengthening Social Cohesion", 2020)

15 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

16 - Formal institutions refer to the regulatory and policy framework that forms the basis for a country's stability. Informal institutions are embedded in the culture of the country, i.e. in norms, values and beliefs.

17 - Innovation The European Journal of Social Science Research, "Social cohesion revisited: a new definition and how to characterize it", July 2018.

Figure 1: The different aspects of social cohesion



AT THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

At the regional level, the response has been primarily military and security-based.

Initially, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)¹⁸ enabled the police to promote the idea of cross-border cooperation, improve tactical coordination and stem the expansion of Boko Haram between 2015 and 2016¹⁹. However, since then, the security response has been at the centre of new tensions and suspicions. Some measures, such as the state of emergency imposed in the lake area, have had a negative impact on the economy, and members of the security forces have been accused of violent abuse and corruption. In Chad, for example, the military is now accused of collecting taxes at improvised checkpoints and committing numerous acts of violence against the population²⁰.

At the local level, there are other mechanisms for easing community tensions.

Traditional conflict management mechanisms²¹ play an essential role in the Lake Chad Basin, particularly with regard to land and natural resource management. In a context where land and resource access rights are generally poorly codified, it is indeed these mechanisms that, among other things, manage the distribution of agricultural land and plots, and regulate access to pastoral and fisheries resources. In Niger, in the Diffa region for example, the village chiefs are in charge of water and their views or decisions are respected by the population. In addition, the local people appreciate traditional mechanisms that often use conflict management methods based on custom or religion. Conciliations

18 - Founded in 1994, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has been in its current form since 2014, with more than 8000 troops from Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.

19 - ICG, "Quel rôle pour la force multinationale mixte dans la lutte contre Boko Haram", July 2020.

20 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

21 - Ils sont définis comme « les processus visant à prévenir, modérer ou résoudre les conflits qui s'appuient sur des individus mobilisant des normes et des valeurs perçues comme légitimes car se fondant sur des références aux coutumes, à la religion et à l'histoire. » (Groupe URD, « Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ? », novembre 2020).

organised within traditional chieftaincies or with religious authorities are based on the Koran and are therefore perceived as proof of faith and practice of Islam. Traditional mechanisms are also valued for their rapid procedures and low cost. In contrast, modern justice is often perceived as remote and corrupt, and therefore more difficult to access²².

2. RESILAC RESPONSE

2.1 PRESENTATION OF PILLAR 1.1 – PILLAR 1.3

To respond to the multidimensional crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, RESILAC adopts a holistic approach based on several pillars that aim to strengthen the local economy, local institutions, and social cohesion. The project’s social cohesion activities are mainly related to pillar 1, which aims to bring about the following three outcomes:

1. The active forces in the targeted territories (particularly young people and women) are strengthened in their ability to analyse their environment and its constraints, and supported in their actions to strengthen social cohesion (pillar 1.1).
2. The psychological state and socio-professional integration of the people affected by the Lake Chad crisis are improved through psychosocial support (pillar 1.2).
3. Concerted and equitable access to natural resources is secured in certain territories, in order to prevent and manage conflicts and identify replicable approaches (pillar 1.3).

This report focuses mainly on pillars 1.1 and 1.3, although the other pillars - psychosocial support (pillar 1.2), economic recovery (pillar 2) and institution building (pillar 3) - have also contributed to strengthening social cohesion²³. The impact of activities is more or less direct at all levels (community members, groups and institutions) but some are aimed more at individuals (strengthening knowledge, values, sense of belonging, etc.) and others are aimed more at the environment, supporting pre-existing structures that promote conflict resolution and civic engagement.

22 - Groupe URD, "Soutenir la cohésion sociale par l'appui aux mécanismes endogènes de prévention, médiation et résolution de conflits ?", November 2020.

23 - See RESILAC "«Capitalization report on the implementation of psychosocial support activities", "Capitalization report on the implementation of economic recovery activities", "Capitalization report on the localization approach within RESILAC".

Figure 2: Social cohesion activities within the RESILAC project



• **The territorial assessments** were the first activity to be deployed in the field during the RESILAC start-up phase. Integrated into the project, they aim to initiate community dialogue at different territorial levels (villages, cantons, communes) in the form of self-analysis of obstacles, constraints and ways of responding to them, while giving a voice to marginalised groups.

• **Support to associations** began after the assessments, which identified the relevant community-based organisations (CBOs) in the community. The aim of the project is to make them stronger and more functional, capable of analysing their environment and acting on the problems and opportunities identified, in order to serve the community.

• **The promotion of rights, co-existence and citizenship** includes activities such as citizens' forums, awareness-raising, sports competitions and cultural events, discussion events, etc. Some activities also involve capacity-building on different themes related to social cohesion (gender, conflict management, NRM, etc.).

• **Natural resource management** aims to strengthen the public authorities, customary authorities and local civil societies to promote democratic governance of NRM. The project promotes dialogue between all these actors, the elaboration of rules of use, locally negotiated agreements, the implementation of these agreements by stakeholders and the popularisation of local rules in the community and among users²⁴.

Pillar 1 is implemented by CARE in Niger, SFCG in Nigeria, and CCFD and its partners in Chad (CSPAR, ACORD, APAD, KAWTAL, GRAVE) and in Cameroon (CDD, ACADIR).

24 - RESILAC, Project Proposal, 2016.

2.2 RESULTS OF PILLAR 1.1 - 1.3*

At the regional level



55 581 participants
at events



2 320 community leaders
participating to NRM trainings



5 709 individuals
from CBOs trained



422 CBOs
benefitting from trainings and material support

At the country level

| Activities | Nigeria | Niger | Cameroon | Chad |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|----------|-------|
| Participants at events | 31 979 | 6 264 | 11 098 | 6 240 |
| Community leaders trained at NRM | 779 | 324 | 440 | 777 |
| CBO members trained | 434 | 2 033 | 1 138 | 2 104 |
| CBOs supported | 4 | 110 | 106 | 202 |

* Results as of July 2022

3. RESULTS

RESILAC aims to strengthen the population's capacity for action and analysis in order to increase social cohesion in the territory²⁵. The project strengthens the knowledge of community members, their individual capacities, and the structure and organisation of their CBOs, in order to implement activities that promote inclusion and social justice.

Figure 3: Results of social cohesion activities within the RESILAC project



3.1 CAPACITY BUILDING

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The project has enabled community members and key stakeholders to increase their knowledge of the territory, and its physical, social, economic and political characteristics. This helps to establish collective awareness of local opportunities and challenges, and encourages citizen mobilisation. In Chad, Niger and Cameroon, the teams carried out a shared assessment of **natural resources**, specifying the different grazing and resting areas, water points, transit corridors, etc.

They have also raised awareness within the population about their **social environment** and the various tensions in the community using various cultural tools (plays, traditional dances, etc.) and through the media. In Nigeria, for example, radio programmes portray the problems of the community in a fictional series, followed by a time of exchange between the listeners and the radio hosts. The project also provides trainings to community leaders on various topics related to social cohesion (NRM, GBV, conflict

²⁵ - RESILAC, Project Proposal, 2016.

management, etc.), and then raises awareness among the inhabitants of their respective communities. In Niger, for example, chiefs were trained by the High Authority for Peacebuilding (HACP)²⁶ and the University of Diffa (among others) on the prevention and rational management of intra- and inter-religious conflicts, but also on the role and responsibility of community chiefs in resolving these conflicts.

Finally, awareness-raising activities have also enabled the population and key actors to become more familiar with their territory's **legal framework**. Better knowledge of legal texts can indeed help the population to balance their relations with the authorities, who sometimes abuse their prerogatives concerning NRM. In Chad, for example, due to a lack of precise knowledge of the laws, some people have paid taxes to gain access to land that should be accessible to all. Through the project, land commissions aiming to improve knowledge of land laws have been strengthened in Chad, Cameroon and Niger.

NIGER - Strengthening of COFOBs to improve knowledge of official texts on land management

In Niger, there is a rural code, i.e. a set of legal and institutional texts that specify the rational management of rural land. The law requires the State to set up basic land commissions (COFOBs) in the villages to ensure that this code is respected and to inform the population of its content. These were absent in most of the intervention zones, so the project set some up in 22 villages. They are made up of different actors involved in NRM (herders, farmers, village chiefs, women's and youth representatives, a water point manager, etc.). The members do not receive any financial compensation, but have a renewable 5-year mandate officially given by the town hall.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The project has empowered community members by acting on both their individual capacities and their environment. The project's cross-pillar approach, which provides both economic and psychological support while aiming to strengthen social cohesion, encourages community **members** to take action. Through psychosocial support²⁷, beneficiaries learn calming techniques (breathing exercises, stretching, etc.) and develop a concrete action plan to solve their psychological and practical problems. A majority of them report that they have felt a sense of increased well-being and control over their lives, and now feel more able and willing to engage in their community. Some also shared their knowledge - such as breathing exercises - with the rest of the population who had not been given psychosocial support, and felt they had become role models in the community.

26 - This governmental institution has existed under different names for more than 25 years and its mission is to cultivate the spirit of peace, to maintain a permanent dialogue between the different communities in the country and to foster mutual trust, tolerance and respect.

27 - Beneficiaries can participate in support groups or have individual follow-up through the PM+ protocol. This support, based on cognitive behavioural strategy, aims to solve psychological as well as practical problems (sources of income, food, housing, etc.).

RESILAC's economic support, through the establishment of income-generating activities (IGAs) and participation in labour-intensive public works (LIPWs), has enabled beneficiaries to meet their priority needs and secure their livelihoods in the longer term. This has given individuals more time and energy to invest in community activities, and increased their confidence that they can have an impact on society.

The project has an impact on community members and on their **environment**, i.e. the pre-existing local structures that allow for citizen mobilisation and conflict resolution. RESILAC first built the capacity of CBOs working in the field of social cohesion. Since 2018, 422 CBOs²⁸ have received organisational support: drawing up internal regulations, redefining the role and objectives of the CBO, access to all the regulations ensuring the legal recognition of the CBO, etc. Of the 422 CBOs who received support, around 90% were trained on various topics²⁹: the basic principles of running an association, the organisation and general functioning of a CBO, the setting up of micro-projects, etc.³⁰. This support has enabled some CBOs to strengthen their self-financing and to specialise more in social cohesion activities.

For example, when we met the youth associations, they did a bit of everything. We selected those that were more specialised in social cohesion activities, such as the organisation of cultural or entertainment events. In addition, they were also involved in agriculture and livestock breeding, and we advised them to continue to do so, but only to support their social cohesion activities, and in a secondary manner.

Field officer, Cameroon

169 local organisations³¹ also received material support from the project. 84% of them said that they had received tools or inputs to implement activities, while 39% had received materials to equip their main office. As for financial support, 84 organisations - in Chad only - stated that they had received sums ranging from 50,000 FCFA to 150,000 FCFA, which were used to start up IGAs and as working capital, and to pay for equipment and additional training³².

The project also strengthened discussion mechanisms, such as community dialogues, by providing better training for mediators. They received support to improve their knowledge about different subjects related to social cohesion and animation techniques. They were also introduced to the gender approach, in order to balance the speaking times between men and women, and to encourage the latter to make their voices heard.

28 - 202 in Chad, 110 in Niger, 106 in Cameroon and 4 in Niger.

29 - Estimates from the endline results, to mention only CBOs and not CSOs.

30 - RESILAC, Endline, September 2022.

31 - This figure includes CBOs and CSOs.

32 - RESILAC, Endline, September 2022.



Animation OBC © RESILAC

3.2 INCLUSION

Social cohesion is a broad and multidimensional concept, based on a multitude of principles considered essential for establishing a society. One of its first aspects is inclusion, which implies a collective feeling, and strong reciprocal ties between members of the community: 'It suggests that members of a society must feel sufficiently supportive and similar, dependent and close to each other, to want to live together'³³.

TRUST AND BELONGING

The project's activities affect people's perceptions, norms and values, and help to strengthen their sense of belonging and confidence in society. In the ethnically and religiously diverse Lake Chad Basin, strengthening this means finding the right balance between recognising all these groups in their diversity and strengthening a common national identity³⁴. To achieve this, the project uses different types of activities to bring together people of different ages, ethnicities, religions and genders around **cultural, sporting or religious events**. In Chad, Niger and Nigeria, the project has brought together Christians and Muslims around the breaking of the fast (Iftar).

33 - Groupe URD, "The Lake Chad Basin: increasing social cohesion by supporting local conflict prevention, mediation and resolution mechanisms?", November 2020.

34 - CCFD, "Chad, intervention methodology: peace, living together and reconciliation in post-crisis territories", February 2020.



Sport event © RESILAC

TCHAD - Cultural and religious activities

The NGO GRAVE brought together people of different religious denominations to share meals during Ramadan (Iftar) in the cantons of Bol, Garangou and Nguelia, and organised a social event at the evangelical church in Baga Sola. These events, which were organised for the first time in some villages, helped to strengthen tolerance and respect between the different religions.

"I was invited as a journalist by CASPR to cover the meeting of Christians and Muslims in the great mosque in Bol. My first impression as a Christian was more of 'surprise'. (...) This is the first time that such a meeting has taken place in Bol to my knowledge. Praying and eating together is a sign of friendship and brotherhood. I was there as a journalist, a media professional, but I was overcome with emotion and I must admit that I have never felt as good as I did that day". Journaliste, Bol, Chad ³⁵.

Civic action, through CBOs, has also strengthened the role of young people and women in the community. By providing a structure for discussion and action, CBOs allowed them to implement concrete solutions on the ground, to strengthen their legitimacy with the authorities and the population, and to feel more included within the community. In Cameroon and Niger, the beneficiaries reported that the women cooperate more with the authorities, and that the latter listen to their proposals when there are

35 - CCFD, "Evaluation of the activities of the CCFD-Partners group in the framework of the RESILAC project - start-up phase", 2020.

disagreements, and help them to mobilise residents for their awareness-raising activities³⁶. In Chad, their role is also valued within the community, particularly in conflict resolution.

The RESILAC project has allowed us to be respected in society. Before, families were torn apart by conflict. With RESILAC's training in conflict management, as female paralegals, we are able to stop a conflict and reconcile families³⁷.

The President of the association of women paralegals, Chad

Feelings of trust and belonging were also strengthened due to the **psychosocial support groups**. Regardless of their ethnicity, age or gender, participants developed empathy and caring by sharing their intimate experiences in regular group sessions. This helped to ease tensions in the operational areas in Nigeria, for example, by assisting the reintegration of some Boko Haram 'survivors'. In Chad, the groups helped to strengthen the dialogue between young and old on subjects such as marriage, work and migration. In Niger, in the village of N'gagala, they strengthened cohesion between the host community and the displaced. In all four countries, many groups have continued to see each other, even after the RESILAC project cycle has ended³⁸.

MUTUAL AID AND COOPERATION

Pillar 1 activities have also strengthened mutual aid and cooperation between individuals. The networking of young people and women within CBOs and CBO platforms has allowed them to pool their resources, promote the exchange of ideas and strengthen the impact of their **actions** on the territory. In an area like the Lake Chad Basin, where the state is still too weak, they play a role in responding to the priority needs of citizens, and can easily intervene to ease certain community tensions related to waste management, NRM, etc. In Cameroon, youth CBOs have carried out civic activities such as cleaning buildings (town halls, mosques, churches, sub-prefectures, hospitals, etc.). They have also set up a vigilance committee to stop the damage caused by pachyderms in their fields.

Cooperation between individuals, especially within CBOs, means that a citizen-based **counterweight** to the authorities and their actions can be established.

36 - CCFD, "Follow-up and exchange workshop CDD, ACADIR and CCFD-Terre Solidaire RESILAC 18 to 20 October 2021 in Yaoundé".

37 - RESILAC, Endline, September 2022.

38 - See RESILAC, "Rapport de capitalisation sur la mise en œuvre des activités de soutien psychosocial".

CAMEROON - Monitoring of the Public Investment Budget by the CBO platform

In Cameroon, each commune has set up a CBO platform, one of whose functions is to monitor the Public Investment Budget (PIB)³⁹. Platform members are trained so that they can establish monitoring indicators, conduct data collection, analyse results and make suggestions for improving the efficiency of the funded projects selected. The platform members also monitor the activities implemented by the city council and its suppliers. In Koza, when suppliers claimed that a bridge was being completed, the platform was able to go to the site, take photos and prove that activities were not progressing, so that the city council referred the matter to the contractors.

Residents have also created cooperative networks around **shared economic interests**. Through IGAs, people of different groups, genders and ages have been able to work together, including through an effective division of labour, for example between men and women, to enhance the impact of their activity. Village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) have also helped to create solidarity mechanisms in the commune. Created or reinforced during the project's LIPWs, they bring together between 15 and 30 people who decide to establish a shared account consisting of a savings fund (used to launch IGAs, for example) and a solidarity fund (used for social and solidarity actions among the members or at the community level). The VSLAs allow the inclusion of people who cannot pay contributions for several weeks, and can contribute to village expenses such as renovating the roof of a school,



VSLA, Cameroon © RESILAC

39 - The allocation from the state budget that is earmarked for expenditure related to the acquisition, rehabilitation and maintenance of infrastructure, equipment, intellectual output and grants.

or financially supporting widows. This area has been particularly successful in Cameroon, where 176 VSLAs have been assisted, 96 of which are now fully autonomous.

3.3 SOCIAL JUSTICE

The RESILAC project has thus contributed to strengthening the ties between people by developing a sense of trust and belonging, as well as mutual aid and cooperation. A second aspect of social cohesion is social justice, i.e. the easing of community tensions through effective conflict resolution methods that preserve the bonds between people. Local institutions play an important role in this respect; whether formal or informal, they provide mechanisms with the potential to prevent conflict. They also enable people to carry out a self-analysis of social tensions and to collectively find endogenous solutions in the form of agreements.

COOPERATION

Various local mechanisms, such as community dialogues or agreements, have made it possible to create a platform for exchange and conflict resolution involving a variety of actors. The project has been able to identify and enhance existing social regulation mechanisms, and to support citizens in co-constructing new social pacts. Through **community dialogues**, the project brings together a diversity of stakeholders from different social, ethnic or religious backgrounds to discuss the problems identified during the assessments: access to natural resources, the place of women in the community, agro-pastoral conflicts, poor coverage of water points, etc. The community leaders, with the help of the RESILAC team, then choose the participants in the dialogues who, after a constructive debate, formulate recommendations and the commitments made in order to implement these.

NIGERIA - Community dialogues in Nigeria between host populations and displaced persons

In Nigeria, in the camp (located in Maiduguri) for displaced people from the commune of Kukawa, dialogues helped to ease tensions over access to water points. Boreholes that were not working were identified and reported to the community dialogue platforms, then to the Local Government Area (LGA) decision making bodies, and finally to the state (Borno) water commission. The local and state authorities then worked together to rehabilitate the faulty water points in the camp, thereby increasing the water supply options for the population.

The RESILAC project has made it possible to bring together the various stakeholders involved in NRM to draw up **local agreements**⁴⁰. In a region where almost the en-

40 - The main objective of local conventions is therefore to establish an accepted order in NRM at a time when there is no other regulation that is known and respected by all users of a shared space.

tire population makes a living from agriculture, livestock farming and fishing, social cohesion can only be achieved on the basis of concerted access to and use of natural resources. Furthermore, in a context where there is a 'clash' between legal texts, which are poorly known by the population (and sometimes even by the administrations), and customary rules, which are difficult to apply, local agreements can be an appropriate tool for defining rules governing access to and supervision of shared natural resources at the local level⁴¹.

Having mapped natural resources, the teams met the different stakeholders involved in NRM and brought them together, often for the first time, to develop local agreements:

- The users (crop farmers, livestock farmers, fishermen, etc.) explain the different conflicts that exist around resources, and how the context is evolving on the ground;
- The religious and traditional leaders then explain the customary rules that govern access to the natural resources in question and that will form the basis of the local agreement;
- The technical services related to different natural resources (environment delegation, livestock delegation, etc.) explain the legal framework in order to ensure that the local agreement is in keeping with it.

With the help of a mediator, all these stakeholders meet several times to elaborate, negotiate and formalise the different rules governing access to natural resources.

FORMALISATION

The RESILAC project has made it possible to formalise implicit and pre-existing rules to do with NRM and to encourage the implementation of an action plan.

Some rules governing access to natural resources already exist but are not always clear and legitimate in the eyes of all stakeholders. Local agreements are a way of making these rules explicit, **formalising** them and sharing them more easily with the population to avoid tensions in the long term.

For each natural resource, RESILAC has also supported the development of an **action plan**, spelling out the objectives and means necessary to ensure compliance with local agreements. In Chad, the multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks set up by the project support the implementation of this action plan. These bring together the various users of natural resources and decentralised state services with the aim of raising the financial resources required for the action plan, ensuring that the local agreements are properly adopted and facilitating their dissemination.

41 - IED Afrique, "Local Conventions".

NIGER - The drawing up of local agreements

In Niger, some transhumance corridors are not marked out, and farmers extend their land without leaving room for the animals to pass. Local agreements allowed corridors to be marked out in the communes of Diffa, Maine Soroa and Nguigmi using GPS provided by RESILAC, and they clarified why it was necessary to do so (120 km in total) in the 10 villages concerned. Although only 41 km have been finalised to date, the local agreements, which are unprecedented in most of the intervention zones, are greatly appreciated by the authorities.

When we were on a mission to the Regional Council of Diffa, the authorities were very satisfied with the work done by RESILAC. They received funding, and made a commitment to do the same thing in the rest of the region, and they asked us if we could share the local agreements that had already been signed with them.

Pillar leader, Niger



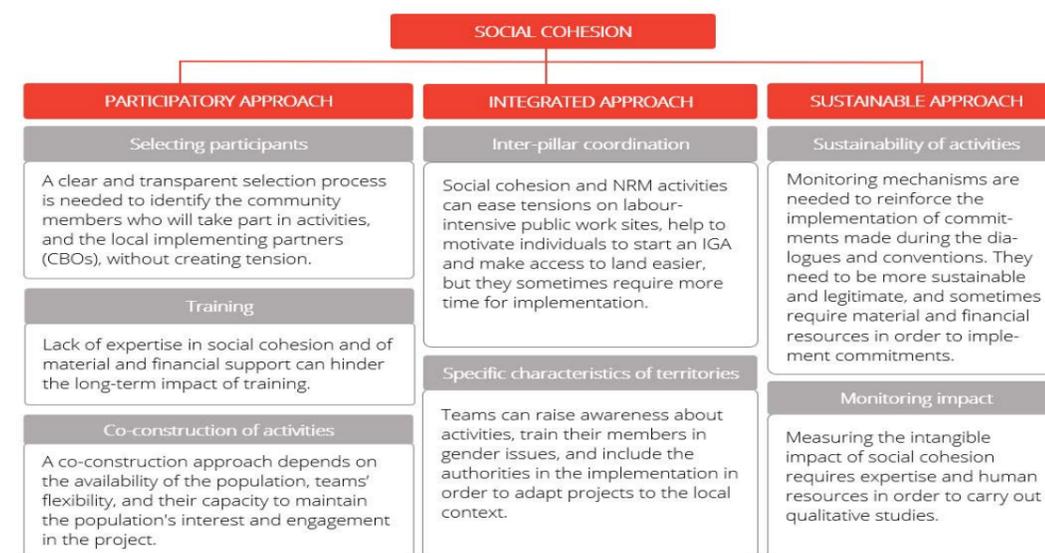
VSLA, Cameroon © RESILAC

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The RESILAC project uses a territorial approach⁴² which aims to strengthen the social cohesion of communities by acting on individuals and their environment. To achieve this, the implementation of Pillar 1 activities is based on:

- a **participatory approach** where local people have a central role;
- an **integrated approach** that adapts to the territories' multidimensional needs (cultural, political, economic and social), in connection with social cohesion;
- a **sustainable approach** that aims to monitor activities closely and measure impact effectively.

Figure 4: Lessons learned from social cohesion activities in the RESILAC project



4.1 PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Strengthening social cohesion in a sustainable way requires a strong commitment from the community. The community needs to take part in identifying the problems facing society and implementing concrete solutions to address them. This helps to strengthen the legitimacy of the project, adapt it to the different contexts within the territory and empower local people to take part in the process of social change. The aim is not to do things «in place of» communities, but rather to accompany them and allow them to take action and organise themselves as they want. This participatory process is based on 1) a relevant selection of local actors and individuals from the local population, 2) capacity building, 3) their involvement in the co-construction of social cohesion activities.

42 - The territorial approach is defined within RESILAC as an approach which is people-centred, adapted to each area, multi-sectoral, multi-level, multi-actor and multi-dimensional. More details in the study «Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience», Groupe URD, March 2022.

THE SELECTION OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL COHESION STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are selected according to a range of formal and informal criteria to facilitate the implementation of social cohesion activities. Affected populations include key actors such as CSOs (civil society organisations), CBOs and local authorities, as well as individuals and families⁴³. They do not all contribute to social cohesion in the same way, and need to be selected in a relevant and legitimate way in order to enhance the impact of the activities they take part in. For example, the CBOs, which are very numerous in the targeted areas, were initially identified during the community assessment. They were then made aware of the project and the possibility of receiving support, and then responded to a call for proposals. Some of them were chosen based on a list of criteria established by RESILAC and the opinions of local actors (authorities, community representatives) also involved in the process.

CAMEROON - The selection of CBOs

In Cameroon, for example, in the four intervention zones, no less than 2,000 CBOs were identified during the initial assessments (although some of them were very informal) and only a hundred or so received assistance from the project. Their selection was based on different criteria:

- the nature of the association (youth, women, mixed);
- engagement in civic actions (mobilisation capacity, responses to development problems);
- the level of organisation (management bodies, reporting capacity, etc.);
- governance (transparent management, communication, activity and financial reports, etc.);
- planning (clear annual planning with activities focused on citizenship, co-existence).

The selection criteria may vary from country to country, depending on the social cohesion approach of the implementing partners. Some also included CBOs that were more specialised in economic recovery, due to the lack of a regional vision in terms of social cohesion and support to the voluntary sector. Finally, in addition to a list of criteria, partners also ensured that local actors were included in the selection process to strengthen its legitimacy. In Chad, for example, members of the provincial administration committee (CPA), the departmental administration committee (CDA), the governorate and the youth platform (CADELAC) were involved.

Some activities, such as community dialogues, require the participation of members from the **local population**. The way that they are selected is important to avoid increasing any pre-existing social tensions and to ensure that dialogue is relevant. The participants selected by the RESILAC team and community leaders need to understand the issues

43 - Groupe URD, *The Participation Handbook for humanitarian field workers*, 2009.

raised during dialogues, ask questions and propose solutions that they can then share with the community. This means including influential people (youth leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders, etc.) but also adopting an inclusive approach so that people of different genders, ages, ethnicities and religions from the community take part.

TRAINING SOCIAL COHESION STAKEHOLDERS

The lack of expertise or of a clear intervention strategy in the field of social cohesion sometimes hampered the impact of training, especially the training aimed at CBOs. All the implementing partners responsible for training CBOs did not always seem to have a common understanding of social cohesion and its objectives. Indeed, it is a vague concept, the contours of which can vary depending on the operational context and implementing partner. Within RESILAC, the implementing partners are different in the four countries: CARE in Niger, SFCG in Nigeria, and CCFD and its partners in Chad and Cameroon. There does not appear to be a clear shared vision of: 1) what social cohesion is and what it aims to achieve; 2) the threats and opportunities that can influence social cohesion; and 3) how to strengthen it. As a result, the training does not always directly address social cohesion needs, sometimes addressing more economic priorities instead. Monitoring the effects of the training is made more complex.

Finally, the **lack of material and financial support** was mentioned as a factor limiting the effectiveness of the support to CBOs. According to the endline, only the CBOs in Chad received financial support, which was sometimes difficult to monitor, so the RESILAC teams preferred to provide equipment (megaphones, posters, etc.) that was directly used for the activities. In Cameroon and Niger, the CBOs planned their activities and their budget to establish what equipment they needed from the project for the implementation.

CO-CONSTRUCTION

For a community to be involved in the genuine co-construction of social cohesion requires time and the availability of the actors on the ground. For the long-term engagement of the community, it is important to ensure that activities are implemented in a participatory manner, which is not only consultative but is part of a co-construction process. For local agreements, community members are first asked to help map natural resources and the tensions they raise. Representatives of the different parties are then invited to participate in the process of writing the agreements, which they then present to the rest of the community in a feedback workshop for validation. This was a new activity in most of the operational areas, bringing together a variety of stakeholders (farmers, fishermen, herders, etc.) for the first time. Such an initiative therefore requires time to allow participants to exchange, understand each other, change their perceptions and agree on a favourable outcome to the conflict. Some did not have a common definition of what 'natural resources' were.

Nomadic pastoralists say that the land belongs to the state, and that they are not accountable to the local people. Crop farmers say that it belongs to their grandparents and not to the state. This difference of opinion is very difficult, and it takes long conversations to get people to understand that the land belongs to the community of which they are all a part.

NRM Facilitator, Chad

A number of meetings, sometimes as many as fifteen, may be necessary before an agreement is signed. It is therefore also necessary to adapt to everyone's schedules and to the operational context, which can vary according to security constraints (NSAG attacks), meteorological constraints (the rainy season) or agricultural constraints (work that needs to be carried out in the fields).

Finally, given the length of the process, for both agreements and community dialogues, it is important to maintain **the interest** of the different participants and to ensure that the exchanges take place in a cordial and communicative atmosphere.

NIGERIA - Organising dialogues

In Nigeria, the organisation of community dialogues starts with internal dialogues within each party to the conflict to clarify points of tension and possible solutions. The project then brings the different actors together for a joint dialogue during which the facilitators also organise cultural activities. When discussions become long and tense, the project then organises traditional dances or a sports activity, in order to create a warm and conducive environment for the discussion.

4.2 INTEGRATED APPROACH

An integrated approach that adapts to the multi-dimensional needs of the population helps to reinforce social cohesion in the long term. Social cohesion is a broad and complex concept that refers to the proper functioning of a society, which is based on socio-economic, cultural and political factors. The RESILAC project adopts this integrated approach, while adapting to the specific characteristics of the different territories.

INTER-PILLAR COORDINATION

In order to strengthen social cohesion in a sustainable way, the project adopts an integrated approach, combining social cohesion activities, economic recovery and institutional support. The economy can promote or threaten social cohesion - depending on the jobs it creates, and its ability to make people of different ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds work together - or the wealth it produces, and its equitable distribution within the community. Politics can also have an ambivalent effect on social cohesion; depending on the presence or absence of the state in certain communities, and its ability to manage conflict and access to basic services. Conversely, a cohesive society also facilitates the implementation of political decisions, with less risk of exacerbating pre-existing tensions. It can also create a more favourable framework for undertaking economic activities, as observed in the RESILAC project. Socio-cultural events and community dialogues have helped to ease tensions on labour-intensive public work sites, build trust between individuals and establish sustainable VSLAs.

However, the time required to implement social cohesion activities and the lack of a common understanding of the context and its challenges sometimes hampered the effectiveness of the inter-pillar approach. Pillar 1 was responsible for community-based territorial assessments, which aim to identify people's problems and then understand their impact on social cohesion (tensions around access to water, resource and power sharing, etc.). Carried out in an inclusive and participatory manner, these two-stage assessments took time and were sometimes not finalised before the launch of Pillar 2 activities. In Mindif-Centre (Cameroon), for example, LIPWs activities began without this second level of understanding, and as the reality of the social fabric was not taken into account at the start, tensions emerged during the implementation of activities, leading to blockages and delays.

NRM activities also promote economic recovery, particularly through the establishment of consultative frameworks and the signing of local agreements. This can facilitate access to land chosen for LIPWs and avoid tensions around rehabilitated properties in the long term. However, the implementation of agreements requires time and effort to ensure their real appropriation by the actors concerned, and to strengthen the committees created to monitor them.

It is especially in relation to NRM activities that we missed inter-pillar coordination. Consultation frameworks were set up and agreements were signed, but only after the labour-intensive public works, whereas it could have helped us to tackle the problems linked to land clearing. The texts are clear and authorise this practice in Chad, but a surveillance brigade attached to the environmental department sometimes comes to tax farmers when they are clearing land in connection with labour-intensive public works. And yet, at the local level, the landowner and the land clearing services have given their agreement. As a result, we sometimes have to choose other sites that are not necessarily as productive.

Pillar 2 Manager, Chad

THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT TERRITORIES

To strengthen the impact and ownership of social cohesion activities, the project aims to adapt its activities to the different socio-cultural contexts of the targeted areas. Gender sensitivity may differ from one operational area to another: local populations are not always in favour of holding mixed dialogues, as observed in some Muslim communities. Socio-cultural studies can then be carried out to find inclusive solutions so that mixed dialogue can take place while respecting local customs. Or, discussion platforms specifically for young people and women, allowing them to express themselves freely, can be created, as in Nigeria. These meet once a month, and their deliberations are then reported to the Community Response Network (CRN), a platform made up of community, traditional and religious leaders. When dialogues are mixed, the facilitators are trained on gender issues to take into account the presence of women and to encourage them to speak out. However, with regard to sports activities, such as football and wrestling, women were not always allowed to take part, thus limiting their participation in the project due to the lack of alternative options.

At the **cultural** level, not all communes are familiar with the practice of dialogue. In Cameroon, for example, in the commune of Dargala, the population had taken part in community dialogues that led to swindles and broken promises. It was only after lengthy explanations with the RESILAC facilitators that they finally agreed to hold dialogues within the community.

At the **political** level, it is important to rely on existing structures and local actors, which guarantee sustainability and legitimacy among the population. For all the large-scale mobilisations (caravans, sports tournaments), for example, the project involves the customary authorities. For awareness-raising, the project uses community leaders who receive training on various subjects related to social cohesion (NRM, GBV, conflict management, etc.). In remote areas where the state is absent, people identify more with community leaders - who may be young people, women, or religious or traditional leaders - than with the local authorities.

Geographically, operational areas are limited to the level of the commune, whereas some social cohesion issues are inter-communal (concerning NRM, or tensions with nomadic herders, for example). Radio was identified as a good awareness-raising tool because it can be used to reach a large, mostly illiterate audience, sometimes located beyond the operational areas, and to broadcast information in different local languages.

4.3 SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

Close monitoring and impact measurement help to ensure that social cohesion activities are relevant and sustainable. However, this may be limited by operational and methodological constraints on the ground.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVITIES

To increase social cohesion sustainably, the commitments made following community dialogues and local agreements need to be monitored at the local level. **Monitoring mechanisms** are therefore put in place within the various social cohesion activities. For the dialogues, monitoring is carried out by the project team, the chef de canton, the competent administrative authority and the mediator, in order to ensure that the recommendations and resolutions adopted during the discussions are implemented. Regarding the local agreements, a multi-stakeholder monitoring committee is set up to ensure that the agreements are implemented. To strengthen the sustainability and legitimacy of these mechanisms, it is important that they are representative and have ties with local power systems. For dialogues, this means ensuring the involvement of local authorities so that they integrate the commitments made into their conflict prevention mechanism. For local agreements, this means ensuring a multi-stakeholder committee that is representative of the different parties involved in the conflict, and strengthening the link with the town hall.

Community monitoring of activities also involves **raising awareness** of the commitments made in local agreements or dialogues. This allows people to take ownership of the measures, which become clearer and more widely supported, and to raise funds for their implementation if necessary. For the local agreements, several awareness-raising tools are used to democratise their use. The development of mapping tools that are made public and accessible to the population allows them to better understand their territory and the distribution of resources, but also to better understand the usefulness of the agreements. Radio also allows the agreements to be broadcast in several languages, beyond the areas of intervention, and to reach a wide audience.

With regard to training, booklets have been developed in Cameroon **formalising the content of CBO training**. Various documents have been produced on the monitoring of PIB projects and the organisation and functioning of CBOs to be shared with other actors so that training can continue.

However, close monitoring sometimes requires logistical and financial means that are not always available at the community level. The implementation of **local agreements** requires resources to materialise the results of negotiations: the creation of multi-stakeholder committees, the marking of transhumance tracks, the rehabilitation of water points, etc. As stated above, in Niger, only 41 km of the corridors have been established out of the 120 km recommended in the local agreements, due to a lack of financial resources. Finally, with regard to **support for associations**, some of them claim to lack the material and financial support needed to continue their activities (see section 4.1).



CBO Cameroon © RESILAC

MEASURING IMPACT

Lack of expertise and human resources has sometimes hampered the measurement of the impact of social cohesion activities on the ground. It is a broad concept that includes political, social, economic and cultural dimensions, with multiple and, more often than not, intangible impacts. The indicators selected to measure the impact of activities provide information about achievements but not about the change in behaviour of community members. They can also be difficult to report, especially for large-scale awareness-raising activities (theatre, radio, caravans) where it is difficult to assess the number of participants. Even when there are fewer participants, for example during community dialogues, long-term monitoring is limited by population movements in unstable operational areas.

However, the project does use an indicator - community-based social capital (CAS) - which aims to measure how these intangible impacts evolve. The score is based on communities' self-perception of social capital, i.e. different aspects of social cohesion such as homogeneity, tensions, sociability, mutual aid, governance, community involvement, etc. The CAS is based on a series of questions, the answers to which are used to establish a score (ranging from 0 to 50); the higher the score, the greater the community-based social capital. This score has been measured throughout the project via baseline surveys, allowing the evolution of the social fabric in all intervention areas to be monitored. It does not directly measure the impact of activities, but rather the evolution of the social context in the operational areas. According to the endline survey, it can be noted, for example, that despite the resurgence of the security and socio-economic crisis since the beginning of the project, the social capital of communities is being consolidated in the operational areas, particularly in the countries where more activities related to social cohesion have been implemented. The rate of change of the CAS score is 16% since the beginning of the project, confirming the importance of activities oriented towards co-existence, inter-religious dialogue and citizenship at the local level.

Qualitative studies are therefore needed to document the impacts of the activities themselves. However, these were not always carried out within the country teams because they require time, human resources, a certain level of expertise in social cohesion that staff in the field do not always have. Monitoring impact is all the more important because social cohesion is not a fixed goal, but rather a dynamic state that evolves with events, relationships and attitudes. It is therefore often necessary to adjust activities to the changing context and to redefine the steps needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of social cohesion.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 STRATEGY

1) Continue to build social cohesion at multiple levels (with community members, groups, institutions) and formalize the intervention logic of Pillar 1 at project level:

- The different project partners do not seem to agree on **a common vision** of: 1) what social cohesion is and what it aims to achieve, 2) the threats and opportunities that can affect social cohesion, and 3) the means to strengthen it.
- Define **the overall methodology** of social cohesion, recalling the importance of adopting a territorial approach, focused on people, adapted to the areas of intervention, and intervening at several levels, in different sectors. In this respect, clarify in particular the link between social cohesion and the other pillars, in order to facilitate the monitoring of social cohesion activities and their implementation on the ground⁴⁴.
- The project could organise a **regional workshop**, specifically on this topic, and formalise the intervention logic through a document shared amongst all team members at national level, which they can adapt to the local intervention context.

2) Continue to have a cross-cutting approach to social cohesion, intertwined with economic recovery (Pillar 2) and institutional support (Pillar 3):

- Social cohesion is a broad and a cross-cutting concept, strongly linked to other project components (economic recovery, psychosocial support, institutional support, etc.). This sometimes requires **strengthening the coordination** between the activities of the different pillars:

- In the economic field, this would mean, for example, strengthening individuals' vision of their project and their spirit of social responsibility towards the community⁴⁵.

- within institutional support, it is necessary to strengthen: 1) support for civil society, in particular CBOs, so that they can obtain CSO status (strengthening their capacities, their structure, their financial resources, etc.), 2) support for state actors (local authorities, decentralised technical services, etc.) to promote dialogue with their communities and include the population in local decisions.

44 - For a more complete definition of the territorial approach, see Groupe URD's study "Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience", March 2022.

45 - Groupe URD, "Iterative RESILAC evaluation with mini-seminar (EIMS 3)", February 2021.

- within the social cohesion pillar, continue to strengthen coordination between NRM, citizenship and community life activities (community dialogues, awareness raising campaigns, etc.).

5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

1) Continue capacity building, with a relevant selection of local actors, more material and financial support, and a stronger expertise in social cohesion within project staff:

- Continue to have a clear and transparent **selection process** of CBOs, while informing communities about the support given by the project and the criteria needed to benefit from it.
- Work to **empower CBOs** to become CSOs.
- Strengthen the **material support** given to CBOs to enable them to ensure the continuity of their activities, and put in place precise monitoring tools for the support given to individual CBOs.
- Strengthen the **expertise** of certain RESILAC partners in terms of social cohesion and capacity building. CCFD-Terre Solidaire for example, has experience in this field which could benefit all the other partners, who can be less familiar with the issues of development and social change. Spaces for exchange and discussion could be organised within the teams, in order to establish together a capacity building plan to share with the CBOs, community leaders, dialogue facilitators, etc.⁴⁶.
- Ensure a sustainable impact of the trainings through **replication mechanisms** (such as the development of training booklets in Cameroon for example) so that community leaders can pass them on to their peers.
- Strengthen the **follow up of training programmes** in order to better measure their impact and adapt their content to different local contexts if necessary.

46 - Groupe URD, "Supporting social cohesion by supporting endogenous mechanisms for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution", November 2020.

2) Strengthen the sustainable impact of local dialogues and agreements with better follow-up of commitments made during the discussions:

- **For local agreements:**

- Strengthen the **committees** created or supported, to ensure their durability (which requires a relatively long support period). The legitimacy and representativeness of these multi-stakeholder committees/frameworks seem to be a fundamental element of the sustainability and effective use of these agreements⁴⁷.

- Ensure **the appropriation and real use of the agreements**, in particular through the development of mapping tools that are made public and accessible to the population, as well as raising awareness of the content of the agreements (local radio, caravans, etc.) and think of mechanisms or tools to measure the effectiveness of the agreements.

- **For dialogues:**

- Ensure the involvement of **local authorities** so that they integrate the commitments resulting from the dialogue into their conflict prevention and management mechanism.

- Raise awareness among **the population** (local radio, speeches by the authorities, caravans) about the commitments made during the dialogue to ensure their involvement in their implementation and, if necessary, their financial contribution.

3) Better adapt certain activities to different intervention contexts and to gender:

- Continue to adapt activities to **gender**:

- For community dialogues, continue and strengthen good practices (e.g. trained dialogue mediators on the gender approach).

- For social activities, adapt certain sports activities (football or wrestling) to which women cannot always participate.

- Adapt activities to the changing context, especially to **global warming**: 1) Focus on raising people's awareness of the risks linked to climate change, 2) Support the establishment of inter-communality in the areas for joint management of natural resources⁴⁸.

- Extend the training on dialogue facilitation techniques **to neighbouring localities**, where the project does not directly intervene but which are sometimes involved in the conflicts addressed during the inter-community dialogues.

⁴⁷ - Groupe URD, "RESILAC iterative evaluation with mini-seminar (EIMS 3)", February 2021.

⁴⁸ - Ibid.

- Adapt to the **population constraints** when organising dialogues or local agreements to strengthen their participation. Members of the community may vary according to the security context (attacks) the weather (rainy season) or the agricultural calendar (field work season).
- Strengthen **the «do no harm» approach**⁴⁹, especially in a context like the Lake Chad Basin, characterised by tensions at the inter-community and national levels. Several tools can be used to have a stronger knowledge of the local context and remain transparent with the communities in order to avoid increasing tensions: in-depth community diagnoses, partnership with local actors, transparency in the targeting of beneficiaries.
- Strengthen a more **«localised»** approach with local and national partners who have a knowledge of endogenous mechanisms and a strong legitimacy in the areas of intervention, which makes it possible to have social cohesion actions more adapted to local practices.

4) Strengthen 'vertical' social cohesion activities, especially between people and authorities:

- While the activities indirectly influence relations between the people and the authorities, the majority of the project activities are mainly oriented towards strengthening the links between community members. Strengthen 'vertical' **social cohesion activities**, particularly with the authorities.
- The monitoring of **PIB projects in Cameroon** is a good example of activities that strengthen the link and cooperation between community members and the authorities.

5) Strengthen the monitoring of the effects of social cohesion and research in this field:

- **Strengthen the qualitative monitoring** of social cohesion effects and the capacities of the field teams to do so. This would allow activities to be adjusted to the changing context, and to redefine the steps needed to ensure the sustainability of social cohesion in the long term.
- **Support the production of knowledge** by continuing to closely monitor conflictuality in the territories and changes in the way these conflicts are resolved on the

⁴⁹ - ACF increasingly measures its activities on the basis of the principle of 'Do no harm' or 'Do as little harm as possible', which means avoiding or minimising the negative impact that may be generated by its humanitarian programmes. It is essential to keep this principle in mind, especially in the context of armed conflict or social unrest, to avoid creating or exacerbating violence and putting beneficiaries at risk. See ACF report, "Humanitarian principles in conflict situations", 2013.

one hand, and by implementing new research (if possible) on the other. Among the topics to be explored in greater depth are the following:

- Women's perception and use of conflict management mechanisms;
- The issues and problems raised by the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus in the Lake Chad region;
- Strengths and weaknesses of peace committees⁵⁰.

5.3 ADVOCACY

1) Share with other development actors the added value of a holistic approach with a strong 'social cohesion' component:

- Emphasise **the importance of the cross-pillar approach and the social cohesion component** - including in emergency areas - to build resilience of individuals and communities in a sustainable manner.
- To share with other development actors **the results and lessons learned** from the social cohesion pillar, an area that is still little known and which importance is underestimated in emergency contexts

2) Emphasise to donors and other development actors the importance of the participatory approach in strengthening social cohesion:

- Emphasise the importance of **the participatory approach**, including key community populations and actors, in the process of strengthening social cohesion. This requires time and flexibility from the project staff, but is essential to ensure the implementation of appropriate activities, respecting a «do no harm» approach, and for a sustainable impact.

3) Emphasise to local authorities the importance of monitoring commitments made during agreements and community dialogues:

- Conduct advocacy around local agreements to give them **legal value** at the provincial and departmental level.
- Conduct advocacy around the commitments made in the community dialogues, and ensure the involvement of **customary authorities** so that they integrate these commitments into their conflict prevention and management mechanism.

50 - Groupe URD, "Supporting social cohesion by supporting endogenous mechanisms for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution", November 2020.

RESILAC*

*LAKE CHAD INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

For more information on the RESILAC project,
please contact H el ene Ronceray,
Regional Coordinator
coordoreg@resilac-actioncontrelafaim.org

For more information on the project's MHPSS
activities RESILAC,
please contact Pamela Londono,
refpilier1-2@resilac-actioncontrelafaim.org

www.resilac.net



Co-funded by the European Union
and the French Development Agency

Members of the RESILAC Regional Consortium



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the French Development Agency. Its content is the sole responsibility of Groupe URD and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the French Development Agency (AFD).

Photo credits:  2022, RESILAC. Tous droits r serv s.
Licence granted to the European Union under conditions.